

M. 162

TWENTY-FOUR HOURS  
OF  
MOLTKE'S STRATEGY,

DISPLAYED AND EXPLAINED FROM THE  
BATTLES OF GRAVELOTTE AND ST. PRIVAT.]

ON THE 18TH OF AUGUST, 1870.

THE FIRST DETAILED ACCOUNT OF THE STRUGGLE OF THE  
FIRST ARMY IN THE MANCE RAVINE.

BY  
FRITZ HOENIG.

WITH TWO MAPS.

"It is impossible to bear the torch of truth through the throng without singeing somebody's beard."—LICHTENBERG.

TRANSLATED BY  
COLONEL N. L. WALFORD.

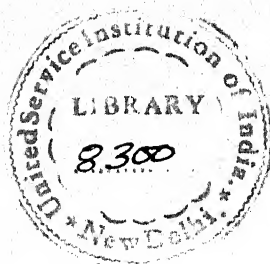
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## PREFACE.

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THE work which follows was prepared for printing after the death of Field-marshal von Moltke; but shortly before the date at which I proposed to hand it over to the printer it transpired that a manuscript "History of the War of 1870-71" had been found among the literary remains of the Field-marshal, while somewhat later it was stated that its publication was already in preparation. When this information was corroborated I delayed the appearance of my work, in order to await the publication of Moltke's book, which would, I supposed, have given a full account of the events which occurred in the space of time which I have here considered. These hopes and expectations have been but very partially fulfilled. The Field-marshal describes and criticizes his advice, conceptions, and acts from the point of view of a Chief of the General Staff, and all this must be received with respect; but, nevertheless, with regard to the time between the issue of the order for the operations of 2 p.m. on the 17th August up to the issue of the order for the battle of 10.30 a.m. on the 18th, there is a gap, which might, in the future as in the past, offer to the enemies of Moltke's strategy material for depreciatory criticism. But it is not only these who have unfavourably criticized the action of these hours; there are even some among Moltke's admirers who cannot on this point "understand" him.

What was then done or left undone by the head-quarters can certainly not in every case be approved, but, taking the day as a whole, I consider its achievements to have formed the culminating point of Moltke's career as Chief of the General Staff, and it is my intention to prove it to be so in this work.

After I had read Moltke's account of the war of 1870-71, I said to myself that the publication of this book was now not only desirable, but was even necessary from the point of view of History and Strategy.

As regards the rest, I desire only to lay stress upon the fact that my work was completed before I saw that of Moltke, and that, after looking through the latter, I found that the two books differed only in two points, namely, with respect to the action of the 9th Corps, and with regard to the use made of the 2nd Corps, concerning which I will say more at the proper places.

So much concerning the Strategy of these hours.

The tactical events of the battle of Gravelotte—I draw attention to the fact that I distinguish between the battle of Gravelotte and that of St. Privat—have not been up to the present related as a whole, since what we know regarding them can be a source of satisfaction to no one. All this is still virgin ground. If we realize that the battle of Gravelotte exhibits a lamentable number of tactical mistakes and omissions, we may further logically conclude that a critical account of it must be very instructive. Perhaps this is the reason why no one has as yet bestirred himself with regard to the tactics of this battle. But, since the great improvement of firearms, there is so much the more occasion for this, in order that we may deduce from a correct description of those events, accompanied with critical investigation, what in the future the attack on “prepared” positions will be like. The war of 1877–78 certainly contained several such struggles, but not one on such a large scale, nor is there in it an example of a whole army extending from a single narrow road under the fire of the enemy’s artillery and infantry, in order to bring about a tactical decision without (up to 7 p.m.) any previous preparation by infantry fire, and without (after 7 p.m.) any support whatever from either infantry or artillery fire.

I know that courage and the labour of many years are necessary in order to treat this great event in an exhaustive manner whose depth may make it worthy of attention. Where I have not succeeded as regards this, I hope that more skilful pens may complete my work; at any rate, I shall have thus given an impulse to the elucidation of these (tactically) most important hours of the great war, hours whose importance does not seem to have been up to the present recognized to its full extent.

The reader will here and there meet with “variations” which sound like repetitions of some idea or another. I have intentionally allowed this, since it appeared to me to be only in this manner possible to prove the correctness or incorrectness of theoretical rules, as well as

to point out the limits where we must depart from principles ; this is the case with respect to the statements with regard to the headquarters, the introduction of the battle, the scouting, the reconnaissance, the simultaneousness of the attacks, etc.

My relation of the tactical events of the 18th of August at Gravelotte must lose some little weight from the fact that I did not myself take part in these struggles. I can therefore only judge from what the present condition of Military History offers to me. The filling in of the picture is given from protracted personal investigations on the actual ground, and from numerous statements by various persons who took part in these events, and who have placed their observations at my disposal. I have therefore, while writing, been obliged in many places to endeavour to see with the eyes of others, in order to get nearer to the actual facts. I am convinced that, for this reason, I have not been able, with regard to these facts, to attain that degree of certainty which I could have wished.

FRITZ HOENIG.

FRIEDENAU, 18th August, 1891.



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# TWENTY-FOUR HOURS OF MOLTKE'S STRATEGY.

## PART I.

### I.

#### INTRODUCTION.

DURING the seventies I revisited the battle-fields of the Franco-German War. When (in 1876) after having examined the battle-field of Gravelotte, I went on to Tarasp in the Engadine, it chanced that I there met General von Franzecky, who happened to be staying at that place at the same time. Since this officer had commanded the 2nd Corps at Gravelotte, I naturally spoke to him of my new researches and impressions. The lively interest which he took in them was one of the causes which induced me to work at my inquiries, with a view to their publication. I gave up the winter of 1876-77 to this task, and the following pages, which I now offer to the public, contain these researches, which in the course of time have certainly been much increased, corrected, and extended. Since then the book has been read by many persons who were prominently concerned in some or other of the events narrated; they advised me to let the matter alone for a time. I found great difficulty in inducing myself to do so, since the strategical and tactical events of the 17th and 18th of August seemed to me to be the most important of the whole war, and have, moreover, in my opinion—more out of personal considerations than for any real reason—been up to the present recorded in a manner which is in some respects confused and in others incomplete. I determined, therefore, to first ascertain how the public would receive an inquiry which should contain an, as far as possible, exhaustive description of these events, and with this object I published in the "Neue Militärische Blätter" an introduction to this book, entitled, "The German and French Cavalry around Metz, from the evening of the 16th of August to the evening of the 18th of August, 1870;" this appeared between September, 1882, and February,

1883. I thus discovered that the time for the production of the principal work had not yet arrived, since, while the men who did the deeds were still sensitive about them, those who had belittled the deeds done were more sensitive still, and the most touchy of all were those who seemed to have accepted all that was written as gospel. The more I thought over previous representations of facts, and the greater the opportunity which I found, in the course of years, to search into the hearts of those who had manipulated these facts, the more I felt it to be laid upon me as a duty, to observe, to listen, and to watch, in order to arrive at a record as far as possible complete. I have not, up to the present, thanks to the success of these efforts, regretted that this work has been so long in appearing, and I have further, while relating everything, intentionally withheld myself, as far as possible, from taking part in any discussions on the subject. If any one wishes to answer me, I will gladly give him the opportunity of doing so; but one thing I will declare, namely, that in the year 1970 no one will comprehend all that was written a hundred years earlier on the subject of the battle of Gravelotte.

The  
"dark  
point in  
the life  
of Moltke.

It requires but a slight knowledge of the critics, and an equally slight knowledge of military literature, to induce us to form the opinion that the 17th and 18th of August, 1870, present *one* dark spot in the life of Field-Marshal von Moltke, and show *several* dark spots in the lives of some other people; and that for this reason it may be undesirable to touch upon these failures and omissions. We have no right, it is said, to jeer at our own glory; we are cavilling at men who have done well; it is unpatriotic and unwise to discuss matters which must be unpleasant to some one or other, etc., etc. But at the present day no difference of opinion can any longer prevail as to where we have acted with wisdom and tact, for has not von Moltke himself been compelled to leave behind him a history of the war of 1870-71, in order to confute the frequent errors made by our wise and sagacious writers.

Our literature shows plainly that we are afraid to closely examine the events of the 17th and 18th of August. This fear is founded not so much upon lack of knowledge or the absence of formed opinion, as upon personal considerations which, although they were, and are, neither fully stated nor well founded, are yet at least in some degree intelligible, considering the spirit which at one time prevailed. Is man, then, a mere molecule of the spirit of his time?

Moreover, careful study with an open mind enables us soon to recognize that there is here no dark spot on the life of Moltke, and that these days, as they were the most full of care, were also the greatest in the career of the Chief of the General Staff, since he had then to struggle with difficulties and sensibilities, and had to consider the peculiarities and the prejudices of men who, though doubtless of merit, could not always understand the Field-Marshal. He wished, and was obliged, moreover, at the same time to avoid everything which might annoy his royal master, and had also to bring on a serious battle at the exact moment when the operations were ripe for a tactical decision.

In consequence of previous events and omissions, and of the pressing demand for action from the leader of the 1st Army; in consequence of the fact that the tactical combats of all three armies had in part followed a course which was not intended; in consequence of the knowledge that, as Moltke himself saw, the 2nd Army had, since 7 p.m. on the 17th, not understood his object, a feeling of irritation had, even in the highest quarters, reached such a stage that all Moltke's greatness of soul, generalship, calm, and discretion were required in the whirling hubbub of "will" and "can," in order to enable him to preserve from danger his great idea, namely, "to maintain first the separation of the enemy's armies, which had resulted from previous events, and then, by turning to the south around Metz, to work against Bazaine on interior lines." It was moreover due to Moltke's tact, to his confidence in his own capability, to his patriotism, and to the rare energy of his mind, that he was not crushed between the gigantic revolving mill-stones, and his idea thus ground to atoms with him. During these hours he fought and strove, not only as a general by the grace of God, with men who could not see as far as he, but also as a hero with strength of character, courage, wisdom, patience, and humility, against vanity, historic greatness, popularity and seniority in the service, while remaining throughout faithfully attached to his royal master. May we not say that under such conditions any other man would have been simply crushed?

Any one who considers these things, and takes into account not only their military but their human side, must arrive at the conclusion that von Moltke, both as a general and as a man, was never really greater than at the moment when others failed to understand him in the manner which he expected. There is, and was, no reason to avoid a full disclosure of the history of those hours, least of all if we are prepared to exactly apportion merit and blame; indeed, he who desires earnestly to deal honourably with von Moltke's greatness must seek for it. Only so shall we be able to understand and appreciate the struggles and the agony of soul of the General during those hours; he had indeed fully advised in his capacity as Chief of the General Staff, but the might of a higher will was needed before his counsel could be carried into effect.

I have been careful to write "developed and illustrated in the battles at Gravelotte and St. Privat," since there were two battles on the 18th of August, 1870. As far as regards the guidance of the two battles by the head-quarters, we may use such an expression with reference to Gravelotte, but scarcely with respect to St. Privat; for from "shortly after 5 p.m." all influence of the head-quarters over Prince Frederic Charles entirely ceased. After that hour there was no communication between the two, and the head-quarters did not receive from the Prince any report of the victory gained at St. Privat until one arrived at Rezonville during the night between the 18th and 19th of August. Gravelotte and St. Privat afford a proof of the maxim that, when the head-quarters are, under such circumstances, posted in rear of a flank, any guidance of the action is possible only by the exertion of every effort, and is even then quite insufficient.

Gravelotte  
and St.  
Privat  
were two  
battles.



The battle of Gravelotte was fought by the 8th, 7th, and 2nd Corps, supported by the 1st on the right and the 9th on the left, and in it the King of Prussia actually commanded. The battle of St. Privat was carried through by the Guard, the 12th, and the 10th Corps, supported by a weak centre, the 9th Corps, which really fought a third action on its own account. Owing to the too great distance of the head-quarters, its influence, even before 5 p.m., was always felt too late, that is to say from the time when the 2nd Army and the 12th Corps had been detached in accordance with its intentions. Thus the selection of the position of the head-quarters for this battle was faulty. The French, on the contrary, differed from this peculiar order of battle by being massed more in the centre than on the flanks.

The positions of the two forces in the early afternoon of the 17th of August.

After the orders issued by the commanders-in-chief on either side, in consequence of the events of the 16th of August, had been carried out, the opposed armies found themselves, shortly after noon on the 17th of August, in the following positions (see Map I.) :—

#### I. FRENCH.

2nd Corps, with Lapasset's Brigade, from Ste. Ruffine to half-way between Point du Jour and Moscou.

3rd Corps, from that point to Montigny la Grange.

4th Corps, from there to the north of Amanvillers.

6th Corps, on the right flank, in and on both sides of St. Privat.

In rear of the 6th Corps was Du Barail's Cavalry Division, while in rear of the 2nd Corps were the Guard, Forton's Cavalry Division, and the main Artillery Reserve.

For further details, owing to want of space, I refer the reader to the *Ordre de Bataille* in the "Official Account."

The main road from Ars sur Moselle by Gravelotte, Malmaison, Verneville, and Habonville, was unoccupied except by some weak advanced detachments, and no hostile forces of any strength appeared until Ste. Marie aux Chênes was reached.

#### II. GERMANS.

1st Corps—Courcelles sur Nied.

3rd Cavalry Division (Coin) at Cuvry, the 1st at Corny.

8th Corps in and near Ars sur Moselle, and in the Bois de Vaux, as far as the south of Gravelotte.

7th Corps—Gorze, with one Brigade in rear at Arry.

9th Corps to the south of Flavigny.

6th Cavalry Division to the west of that place.

3rd Corps at Flavigny and Buxières.

10th Corps at Tronville.

5th Cavalry Division and 3rd Cavalry Brigade of the Guard to the west of that place.

12th Corps—Mars la Tour and Puxieux.

Guard Corps—Suzemont.

1st Guard Cavalry Brigade at Sponville, with a mixed detachment pushed forward to Porcher.

12th Cavalry Division at Parsondrupt.

11th Corps—Pont à Mousson—Gézoncourt.

4th Corps—Menil la Tour and environs.

The opposing armies were thus massed, since the French (who did not make any alteration up to the beginning of the battle of the 18th of August) extended over a space of from eight to nine miles, while the Germans showed a front of about twelve and a half miles, if the 1st, 2nd, and 4th Corps, and also the Cavalry Division of the 12th Corps, be left out of account. It was possible for the 1st and 2nd Corps, but not for the 4th Corps, to assist the 12th Corps on the 18th of August.

We see at once that Marshal Bazaine had given up all the roads leading to the west and north-west; only one remained to him, that by Thionville. Even the road to Auboué he could hardly use without fighting, while that to Conflans was out of the question. The Germans held the road Metz-Suzemont-Verdun, while that from Gravelotte to Conflans was within their tactical, and that to Auboué within their strategical, zone of effect.

The positions of the hostile forces formed an angle of exactly ninety degrees, joining each other in the Bois de Vaux and at Gravelotte, while the outer flanks were a good ten miles apart, less, however, than a short day's march. The French leader proposed to act on the defensive, and under the other favourable conditions in which he was placed, it is at least intelligible that he should have drawn back his cavalry behind his front. No such reason can be found to explain the similar action of the Germans; but this point will be considered later on. Only one general, the then Crown Prince of Saxony, handled his cavalry well, but he pushed them boldly to the front to Parsondrupt and the Conflans-Etain road; if the remainder of the cavalry had been used in the same manner, they would by the evening have secured Conflans and Auboué as posts for observation, assuming, as is now known to have been actually the case, that the enemy were expected to retire towards the north. If the cavalry had been pushed forward to these points, they would have come upon the enemy at Ste. Marie, and might thus on the 17th have fully cleared up the whole situation, and have easily reported all results up to that evening. The reason that the opposing generals did not make a proper use of their cavalry was, that they both wished, *in any case* under all circumstances, to avoid a battle on the 17th. This common object, springing as it did from different motives, marks the distinction between a true general and a "general." A true general would have learnt everything in good time by dint of skilfully using his cavalry, and this probably without losing a horse or a man; the generals of both armies learnt but little of that which they ought to have known before issuing definite orders, since the master-hand was wanting, which might have held the cavalry so completely under control as to have successfully watched the enemy, while at the same time avoiding an engagement.

There can be but few instances in military history where so many failures and mistakes of every kind occurred as was the case *The importance of the*

strategical  
and tactical  
events in  
the Mance  
Ravine.

before Metz on the 17th and 18th of August, 1870. In saying this. I am speaking generally. If we go into details, we find that the strategical objects and the tactical principles, together with the means adopted to attain them, of the struggle in the Mance Ravine are well worthy of careful investigation; this is the more the case, since various things happened there which, if they are not well taken to heart, must, in the future, lead to most disastrous consequences. It is very remarkable that while the details of the fight at St. Privat have from the first been the subject of so much criticism that an important mass of literature on that subject is in existence, those of the struggle in the Mance Ravine have up to the present, as far as I know, failed to give employment to a single pen. Yet the errors at St. Privat, terribly as they were punished, belong rather to minor tactics, and were, consider them how we may, but trifles compared with the mass of strategical and tactical faults and omissions perpetrated by high, and even by the highest, authorities in the Mance Ravine; and these faults repeated themselves to an extent which continually increased from the beginning to the very end of the battle. If we consider only the events themselves, which took place in the Mance Ravine, and which make us hold our breath in continued excitement, we shall feel that a whole world was in stirring action at this point; there were the head-quarters with their crowd of celebrities, the general commanding the 1st Army, General von Goeben, General von Zastrow, and General von Franzecky, all names already well known to history.

The origi-  
nal cause  
of the  
mistakes.

The terrible events which came to pass on the 18th of August, distinctly endangering the great strategical scheme which had developed up to that date, had various causes. Of these the principal appears to me to be quite obvious, when I recall the conduct of Napoleon I. on the afternoon of the 13th of October, 1806. Notwithstanding that he had ridden far, and had undergone great previous fatigue, the Emperor made a personal reconnaissance at Jena, when he arrived there at four o'clock; he gave orders for the immediate construction on the Steiger—a difficult mountain path—of a road suitable for guns, in order to create a possible line of approach for his artillery up to the enemy's position, and allowed till the following morning for its completion; when he had himself seen everything, had himself made his decision, and had himself given all orders, then, and not till then, did he take his rest in his tent, close to the enemy, in the ranks of the grenadiers of the 4th Regiment. He did all this after 4 p.m. on the 13th of October, 1806; what were the German head-quarters doing in the same direction after the early morning of the 17th of August, 1870? I will not say that they did nothing; but, considered as independent generals, they acted very differently. Consequently the Germans, at the time when the orders for the movements of the 17th and for the battle of the 18th were issued, had not full information with regard to the position of the enemy, and were not even well informed with respect to it when the battle had already passed into its first stage, since, up to 5 p.m., the head-quarters had no knowledge of the amount of the extension of the



French right flank. Moreover, since a whole day passed without anything of importance being done by which the proper guidance of the army might have been facilitated, all possibility of such guidance during the battle was lost; this fact no one can deny.

In one point only is the difference between the two cases favourable to the Germans. The orders for the movements, issued at 2 p.m. on the 17th, and those for the battle, given out at 10.30 a.m. on the 18th, are works of art as regards their form, while Napoleon's order for the battle of the 14th of October is not only nothing of the kind, but is perhaps in this respect the very worst that he ever issued.

## II.

CONCERNING THE HEAD-QUARTERS AND THE POSITIONS OF THE LEADERS  
DURING THE BATTLE.

The head-  
quarters  
before a  
battle.

IF we study Napoleon's system of conducting war, which was, moreover, assisted by no electric telegraphs, we find, as a rule, that the emperor, as he approached nearer to the enemy, pushed his head-quarters more and more to the front, so much so that on the night between the 13th and 14th of October, 1806, Napoleon was within a square formed by a regiment of infantry, which he had selected for this special honour, and was immediately in contact with the enemy. It is not, however, possible on this point to lay down rules which shall be invariably correct; the choice of the position for the head-quarters depends rather upon the special circumstances of each case, and, above all, upon one's own intentions and the probable designs of the enemy. One only principle must always be right, namely, that when a battle is imminent, one should be as close as possible to the scene of action; for though the telegraph can certainly send information quickly, yet the road to the battle-field must be traversed on four legs, of which the endurance and the rapidity is limited. Even when the leader in a battle is a particularly good rider, and is mounted on an exceptionally good horse, this principle does not lose its force, since the horses of the leader's staff and the freshness of the staff itself must be considered; and these, if the head-quarters are too far to the rear, will be obliged to use such exertions that the horses will not be able to keep up, and will in many cases be exhausted, while their riders will naturally lose their freshness if the pace be too great. We know well what a strain it is upon horsemen to get over long distances at a rapid pace. But since the tactical handling of the troops will eventually call for yet greater exertions on the part of the staff, we must certainly do all that we can to get as near as possible to the anticipated field of battle, since only thus can we avoid too great a distance and undesirable and premature fatigue. Moreover, the danger that a head-quarters may be attacked or swept off by the enemy need scarcely be taken into account, since sufficient troops for its defence will always be available, and in contact with the enemy.

According to Napoleonic teaching, which, in this case, is an example to us, the nearness of the head-quarters to the enemy offers yet other advantages; for the general thus obtains a great gain in time for that which he himself wishes, does, and must do, and also

for everything which others ought to carry out in accordance with what he observes and with his consequent orders. He is on the very spot, and has time to see everything himself, and this personal observation is now, as it was formerly, under circumstances such as those of the 17th and 18th of August, one of the first duties of a general.

Such a method of proceeding certainly presupposes that considerations regarding personal accommodation need not be taken into account, at least not to a detrimental extent. But at an advanced period of life considerations regarding comfortable accommodation are necessary, if a leader desires to find himself relatively fit for work on the day of battle. A general of from thirty-five to forty-five years of age will think little of losing a night's rest, or of contenting himself with a tent pitched among his troops, but this can scarcely be expected of officers of seventy or more; it would be unreasonable to hope for it. These facts, however, prove that a general must be bodily as vigorous and robust as possible, so that he may have no fear for himself from exceptional fatigue under exceptional circumstances. If, for example, we imagine Napoleon—such as he was at Jena, Borodino, or Dresden—placed in the position of the German leaders on the 17th of August, we may be sure that he would have announced where he would be found at certain given hours, while he would in the mean time have flown hither and thither, leaving no method untried by which he might obtain information with regard to the enemy's position; and all this without any effort to avoid the most extreme bodily exertion, and without taking account of the employment of his cavalry, being determined to pierce the veil by his own observation, which, in such cases, is always the best. We may also be sure that the news of the battle of the 16th of August would have called him up betimes to Rezonville on the 17th, in order, after starting from there, to shift his point of view, to see everything himself, to summon the leaders of both armies to his side, and, after settling all that remained uncertain, to dictate his orders for the battle. Since the German right flank might be in some danger during the general deployment, Napoleon would have posted himself at this point, while reports might come and go; he would have remained close to the enemy during the night between the 17th and 18th of August, at some point or other on the right flank, while on the 18th, in the early morning, say at 5 a.m., he would have been again in the saddle, in order first to observe what was going on in front of the German right, while he would have moved thence in a northerly direction, in order to endeavour to complete his survey of everything which might up to that time have remained uncertain.

The emperor would then, in all probability, have suitably completed or modified his last orders, and would have selected some point in the neighbourhood of Verneville as the position for his headquarters, whence he would conduct the battle. All this would have called for no special exertion, owing to the relatively short distances, the many and good roads, the fine weather, the dry soil, and the numerous points from which it was possible, without any particular risk, to observe the enemy's position.

Napoleon, under the circumstances which prevailed at 7 a.m. on the 18th of August, would have known, without using a single squadron, whether any, and, if so, what changes had taken place since his last appreciation of the situation (at midnight, on the 17th of August), and his head-quarters would from that hour have been firmly established at the right point (near Verneville), and would have there remained up to the time when the decisive crisis arose at St. Privat. Napoleon would have held it necessary to place himself near that flank, as soon as he had taken the required steps with regard to his pivot on the right. This would have been the behaviour of a young Napoleon.

The influence of age upon the selection of accommodation for the head-quarters.

At the German head-quarters great attention was paid towards sparing men of advanced age, and the same was the case, for other motives, in the higher commands; at all events, matters, which were on this account much considered at the head-quarters and in the higher commands, had a prejudicial effect, and acted injuriously upon the work to be done, while they could, speaking generally, have been brought to a good result only by the greatest conceivable exertion, and by the employment of machinery which did not exist on the 18th of August. Opinions at head-quarters, which were correct under the existing circumstances, attributed a great part of the blame to the objectionable conditions against which the directors of the battle had to strive on the 18th of August. From this we may learn how important it is to make a good choice for the position of the head-quarters, while, strictly speaking, almost everything that was done in this direction before Metz, between the 16th and the 18th of August, must be condemned.

Let the facts themselves speak. Whilst fighting was going on near Vionville on the 16th of August, Prince Frederic. Charles was at Pont à Mousson; he was very late in reaching the battle-field from that place. During the night, between the 16th and 17th, he was at Gorze, while Steinmetz was at Coin-sur-Seille. The head-quarters, which came from Pont à Mousson, reached the hill near Flavigny at 6 a.m. on the 17th; at 2 p.m. the orders for the movements of the 18th were issued from Flavigny. Why was this done at so early an hour? Was it because the head-quarters would, ought, or must return to Pont à Mousson? It is impossible to find any other reason. Thus the question of the provision of suitable head-quarters was considered of the first importance, and out of regard for this the events of the day (the 17th) were not awaited on the scene of action, while the orders for the movement of the army were issued with a very small regard to the actual state of affairs. And yet reconnaissances pushed out along the roads to the north and north-east, from Gravelotte to the Orne, would have called for much less exertion than moving from Pont à Mousson to Flavigny and back on the 17th, and again from Pont à Mousson to Flavigny on the 18th of August. Thus the careful attention paid to the position of the head-quarters was really responsible, in a great measure, for the imperfections, the errors, and the failures of those hours, and, above all, for the state of ignorance which existed with regard to the enemy, under

circumstances which, as far as the Germans were concerned, could not have afforded easier or more inviting opportunities for learning everything, and for learning it in good time. For, by between 2 and 3 p.m. of the 17th, the French were in the position in which they were attacked on the 18th. At about the same hour, the German orders for the movement of the army were issued.

If it had been determined not to return to Pont à Mousson, but to remain close up to the enemy, even then, as we now know, nothing more would have been learnt, and nothing better would have been ordered, since equally little was done in this respect during the period of the stay of the head-quarters and after their departure. Yet how much there was to do, and how easy the enemy made it all for the Germans! There is hardly a single other instance in military history of a great decisive battle where, as in this, the assailant had almost everything offered to him, as it were, on a waiter. General von Steinmetz passed the night between the 17th and the 18th of August at Ars-sur-Moselle, while Prince Frederic Charles was at Buxières.

On the enemy's side, we find Marshal Bazaine in the village of Plappeville; this was, at any rate, in accordance with the plan of "strategy" on which the marshal acted.

The French general remained in about the same place during the battle, and consequently continued in the same error. The German head-quarters were between Gravelotte and Malmaison; the selection of this point was not strategically correct, it was even opposed to the special plan, while it was tactically unfavourable. Thus it came about that the head-quarters of the two hostile forces were both, for different reasons, in the wrong positions, and were almost exactly opposite to each other. General von Steinmetz remained during the battle to the south of Gravelotte, while Prince Frederick Charles was near Habonville.

If the head-quarters before a battle such as we are now considering—in front of a position which practically cannot be changed, and in which the enemy intends to receive our attack—have been suitably selected, their position during the battle is easily settled. This is governed by certain conditions. It must always be easily reached, and as far as possible in rear of the centre, unless it is necessary to place it in rear of the strategical flank, that is to say the flank with which the assailant intends to make his decisive and victorious attack. It must be possible to govern the course of the battle in all respects, so far as the few important items are concerned, such especially as the opening of the action, the posting of the reserves, the out-flanking movements, etc. The general's position must also be so far from the struggle that he cannot be influenced by minor events, such as he might himself see, for these might affect him, and might incline him to take narrow views; for he must not lose the main threads of the action, nor must he make minor details into great events; should he do so, he will become false to his own principles, not only as regards his plan, but still more as to the manner in which he intends to work out that plan, passing gradually from step to step.

Considerations with regard to the position of head-quarters during a battle.



In the Mance Ravine, all these matters were jumbled together and intermixed. Not only are these things very instructive tactically, but, if we from this point of view consider the head-quarters, with their position and action, we shall find much that is worthy of earnest consideration, and which, moreover, might not have been altogether free from objection in the case now before us. While discussing these matters, we shall not, of course, mention any particular individual, but on this point the general character of the circumstances must be borne in mind, since no one person among the leaders in 1870-71, was so conspicuously in the foreground as was, for example, the first Napoleon. Since this was the case, we may be so much the more free in our conclusions. We must certainly own that he who leads in a battle is equally responsible for loss and gain, but even the leading has in these days far less of a personal character. It is usually carried out by individuals organized under a head, and depends rather on a system than on a person. The system requires a technically skilled head, otherwise it will fail, but it is not yet quite certain how far this head must be tied down, and the mode of action is not exactly clear, supposing that something happened which the head did not wish, and this at a time when the situation was a little complicated.

If all this be taken into account, the German head-quarters were at first too far from the battle-field; they next arrived there too late; they next placed themselves in rear of a flank, and that the least important of the two; they were then too near the fighting-line, and finally committed the worst fault of all, in that they "commanded" instead of "directing."

The number of persons with the head-quarters and with the army staffs in the war of 1870-71 was so great that Frederic and Napoleon, if they could have been suddenly sent back into this world, would have stared about them with extreme astonishment. So small a staff as Napoleon used for the direction of his army is, however, sufficient only when a Napoleon is in command; but in 1870-71 the head-quarter staff, and in some cases one or other of the army staffs, was certainly very large; and large staffs, especially if increased by royal spectators, may under certain circumstances be most undesirable and inconvenient. If a head-quarter, or an army staff consists only of persons who are necessary on military or political grounds, things will then work at their best; and this should be invariably the rule. For it is easier to find accommodation for a staff of this size, while, since it is comparatively small, the authorities whose decision governs the action can, if it be advantageous to do so, get closer up to the enemy. In this respect we have acquired very bad habits, which are very noticeable even in peace at the Autumn Manœuvres. In these latter there is certainly some advantage in having, whenever possible, three or four substitutes for every post, but in war, on the contrary, the main principle of simplicity and necessity must be adhered to as regards the higher staffs, as in all other matters, for it must be remembered that everything which is not absolutely necessary checks the movement of the great organism.

We must undoubtedly in the future avoid such large head-quarter and army staffs as we had in 1870-71. Moltke, on this subject, says—

“To the former (the Minister of War) we attribute in peace the administration of the army, and there are thus in war a number of functionaries at home, who will only allow themselves to be guided from a central point. *The Minister of War does not, therefore, belong to the head-quarters, but should remain in Berlin.*”

Moltke says this, not with regard to the objectionable number of persons at head-quarters, but with reference to the way in which the work should be done; he therefore gives still more ground for my opinion. Too many cooks spoil the broth. War suspends the policy of diplomacy, and, as long as arms rule, the latter has nothing to do. When arms have ceased to speak, then the hour has come for diplomacy to take up again its questions of policy. Though King William I. never held a council of war, it is possible that, even if only occasionally, in conversation at table, or in other places, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of War had private opportunities of expressing their opinions. This did actually take place, and that not only in the above manner, as we learn from the discussion as to the siege and the bombardment of Paris. When the head-quarters, with reference to the conduct of the war, and also as regards its leader and the chief of the general staff, is of such overwhelming greatness, as was the case in 1870-71, the efforts of others will have no influence upon the plans and operations; but who will ensure that we shall in future have so strong a head for the army? If this were not the case, irresponsible persons might easily obtain a fatal influence, as, indeed, happened in Prussia, in the war of 1806. Moreover, only such a theatre of war as France can possibly provide means for the accommodation of so large a staff.

Napoleon made a mistake in the days before Jena, since he to some extent allowed the enemy to march by him; but from the moment that he recognized his error his personal conduct was a pattern. As regards this question, there is now a distinct school formed, which teaches that it cannot be the duty of a general to reconnoitre in person, since he has other means for this purpose, and since it is his business to discover which among the various reports is correct. We have on this point to deal with an instance of the vagueness of the spirit of the times, which has already done sufficient harm, which tries to make one shoe fit every foot, and which pays more attention to the impression which its method of representation makes upon the reader, than to teaching the latter the art and the history of war. This is the same system which refuses to any longer distinguish between strategy and tactics. When a general receives information which affects the domain of strategy, it is then certainly not his duty to personally reconnoitre. On the other hand, when a case occurs, as on the 17th of August, 1870, where by means of two preceding battles, touch has been obtained of the enemy, and where, as on the 17th, it is possible for hours together, and with the naked

Ought the  
general in  
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reconnais-  
sance in  
person.



eye, to observe a great part of the movements of the enemy, and to follow him to his starting-point, while, however, it still remains uncertain whether the foe intends to retain his whole force or only a part in the neighbourhood of Metz, then circumstances are changed, and in that case the general must himself reconnoitre. Moreover, we seem to have held somewhat tenaciously to the school which forbids us to annoy any one, even though a false and unmanly consideration for individuals may endanger the great and vital truths of the art of war; such beliefs as this can in no way do good service to Moltke's heroic character. Owing to the fact that some persons have constantly restrained themselves from looking into these matters, many things have now grown to be maxims, not because they were rightly done, but because such and such a man did them. The worst of it is, that this feeling is not exceptional, but that no one dares to oppose the spirit of the times.

Up to six p.m. on the 17th of August, it was possible for the Germans to obtain, without any difficulty, all the information that could be desired with regard to whether the enemy remained near Metz. From such reports it would have been possible to ascertain that the enemy was awaiting the Germans in a strong position, since during those hours he was occupied in preparing that position for defence. This was the moment when the general himself should have reconnoitred; while, since the days in August are longer than in October, the Germans, on the evening of the 17th of August, ought to have been better informed regarding the enemy than Napoleon was on the evening of the 13th of October, and should thus have been able to issue all necessary orders. Indeed, the general and special circumstances were more favourable to the Germans than they were to the emperor. Only what should have been done was left undone, and we must later on show the reason why this was the case. On this page we propose only to combat the false maxim that in these days a general need no longer reconnoitre in person.

The French position at Gravelotte-St. Privat had been prepared beforehand for defence, and in all such cases the general, even though he have received good information, must himself reconnoitre in person. I venture to lay this down to the school of to-day as a cardinal axiom, since it is probable that the typical battle of the future will, as regards the defender, closely resemble those now in question.

There would, moreover, have been ample time for the most complete and comprehensive reconnaissance, but even at the point where the foes were in close contact (on the right flank), not one of the higher leaders made any reconnaissance on the 17th or 18th of August, nor did they order any, nor later on did they take any trouble to keep up connection between the troops who were in front of them and their staffs, though, considering the tactical situation, all these were both necessary and practicable. If we were to draw up a form of government on the lines laid down by some individual man, this might be convenient for the rulers and without danger for the State, so long as the author of the constitution was at the helm; but the danger begins so soon as he is no longer there. This is exactly the case as

regards the few great maxims of war. Though Napoleon at 4 p.m. on the 13th of October, 1806, behaved in such and such a way, and won the victory, and though Moltke from the early hours of the 17th of August, 1870, did so and so, and was also victorious, this does not prove that they both did right, even though they were Napoleon and Moltke, and both won a victory; for the art of war demands that, without any regard to the personality of the individual or to his success, his conduct shall be judged by its suitability to the special circumstances in which he is placed, and that the result of full investigation shall alone afford a basis for maxims.

No maxim of war can suddenly become a fallacy because a general of seventy or more years is physically incapable of doing what is easy to a younger man. A maxim of war cannot be founded upon the age of Radetsky, or upon that of Alexander, of Cæsar, of Frederic, or of Napoleon, but it should be mentioned in which cases old age compelled a neglect of its laws, and when bodily vigour gave the power to obey them. If we acted thus, we should hold to the old principle, in its eternal and unimpeachable truth and accuracy, which lays down that under circumstances such as obtained (as regards the Germans) on the 17th and the morning of the 18th, the Commander-in-Chief, unless he is prepared to resign all guidance of the battle, should himself reconnoitre, as Napoleon did before Jena. As a matter of fact, nothing was done on the German side, and there was, moreover, no guidance during the battle. Oily flatterers have tried to legalize such action by saying that in the present day a commander-in-chief is *only* a strategist in battle. A commander-in-chief must always be a strategist in battle, or he would cease to be commander-in-chief, but if he wishes that the fruit of his strategy shall not escape him, he will, when the time of trial comes, offer his most sincere thanks for the "only," but will make up his mind to be also a tactical leader in the battle. In this case, the correct selection of his position becomes of importance.

Gravelotte and St. Privat were not two battles in the same sense as were Jena and Auerstädt. Napoleon alone commanded at Jena, and Davoust at Auerstädt; neither of them knew what the other was doing, neither knew that the other was in action at all, and Napoleon, until after he had won his victory, received no news of the ruin of the Prussian main army. Moltke, in his order of 10 a.m. on the 18th of August, dealt with both armies; but, on the other hand, he so shaped the course of the intended battle that, as a matter of fact, two battles took place; for when one of two armies escapes from command, it practically fights a battle on its own account. But if we argue from the separation of the 2nd Army that it will not be possible to handle similar masses to those at Gravelotte-St. Privat, and with even greater success, we are again striving to legalize a sin, and are again laying down a false maxim of war, which Moltke would have unhesitatingly swept aside.

A better system of leading might have been possible even at Gravelotte-St. Privat, if a sufficient reconnaissance had been made beforehand, and if a corresponding selection of the position of the

Can battles  
such as  
Gravelotte-  
St. Privat  
be con-  
ducted by  
one man?

leader had been made. Up to the 18th of August, all the battles had been improvised, but on that date it was possible to fight a battle on a settled plan, for the arrangement of which there was indeed more time available than would ordinarily be the case; and yet Fate decreed that, under the eyes of Moltke himself, the very thing should arise which had been the curse of the former battles, the thing which Moltke himself hated, namely, great difficulty of direction, and even the entire abandonment of all guidance. To such a man as Moltke this must have been very grievous, but it was not the consequence of his strategy; the real causes will be treated of later on. The one great fact, that Moltke had been able to assemble nine corps and six cavalry divisions so exactly at the right moment that they could all, if necessary, be used in the battle, and this in the most effective strategical direction, is in no way lessened by the above-mentioned failure. Strategically speaking, this is, since generals have existed, both really and ideally the finest example of direction, and if Moltke had been commander-in-chief instead of chief of the general staff, not only would this grand result have been brought about more smoothly, but he would with the same skill have worked out the second portion of his task—the direction of the battle. In that case, we should now have an example of leading in both respects, namely, in deploying to a reversed front, and in the development from this deployment of a planned battle against a position exceptionally strong by nature, and fully prepared for defence by art. It is true that we may admire the victory of Sedan with respect both to the movement and the handling of masses; but Sedan was not a battle delivered against a position strong by nature and fortified by art.

### III.

THE OBJECTS WHICH THE FRENCH PROPOSED TO ATTAIN BY THEIR  
MOVEMENTS AND BY THE BATTLE. THEIR DISPOSITIONS FOR BOTH.

MARSHAL BAZAINE had received an impression, from the reports on the battle of the 16th of August, that he would not be able on the 17th to continue his march on Verdun, which had been interrupted by that action. He had very much over-estimated the strength of the Germans on the 16th, and thought that they would be considerably stronger on the 17th; while, since they were now in possession of the road Metz-Vionville-Verdun, from which the marshal had been forced on the 16th, Bazaine had available no roads but those by Conflans and Briey, of which the latter could be reached only by a march of no small length. The marshal gave up for the present any idea of falling back on Verdun or Châlons, being under the impression that by such a movement he would bring on a fresh action with forces stronger than those which he had met on the 16th, and because the movement of part of the army from the line of battle of the 16th on to the road to Briey did not (owing to the fatigue of the troops and the nearness of the enemy) appear likely to be by any possibility completed in such good time, as to enable such an undertaking to be carried out without risk. When we consider that nearly the whole of the French army was, on the evening of the 16th of August, in the rectangle Gravelotte-Doncourt-Rezonville-Bruville, with the Germans in their immediate front, and with only the road to Briey in rear of them (that to Conflans being on their right flank), we shall feel that the breaking-up of the line of battle of the 16th, the arrangement of the order of march, and the distribution of the corps for a movement on a more distant objective, were indeed very serious matters. From his experience of the 6th, 14th, and 16th of August, the marshal could not hope that the Germans would allow this breaking-up to proceed without interruption; while, unless this was the case, it was quite impossible that such a march on a distant objective could be successful. Moreover, the French army was deficient in ammunition and in supplies, which fact confirmed the marshal in his above-mentioned decision.

The general position on the evening of the 16th of August. The reason for the interruption of the march to Verdun.

Matters have indeed at the present day quite a different appearance to that which they then had. Moltke, for instance, says:—

“But the principal care of the marshal seems to have been not to be cut off from Metz, and he therefore directed his attention almost entirely

upon his left wing, since, while he continually sent reinforcements to that point, he crowded the whole of the Imperial Guard and part of the 6th Corps opposite to the Bois des Ognons, from which no attack ever took place. We are compelled to accept the conclusion that already on this day political reasons *alone* induced Marshal Bazaine to remain in Metz."

Since this sentence refers to Bazaine's action on the 16th, the "alone" and the "already" of the above must at least equally apply to the 17th and the 18th; in other words, Moltke does not altogether believe in the reasons put forward by Bazaine, but considers that political reasons chiefly governed the dispositions made by the marshal on the 16th of August.

The decision to retire on Metz.

When the marshal, under the pressure of the German initiative, renounced all resumption of his march on Verdun and Châlons, he was compelled to consider where and how his army could most quickly be brought into the condition which he desired, in order to enable it to regain its lost fitness for military operations. Since it was no longer capable of holding its own in the field, this could be found only in the fortress of Metz. Standing as did the French army on both banks of the Moselle, it became a question whether it should retire directly and seek cover behind the river (with intentions which would be of importance later, but need not yet be considered), whether it could fight with both flanks resting on obstacles, or whether Metz should be used as a support for one flank only. There was not, however, on the west bank of the Moselle near Metz, any position which would secure both flanks, and, quite rightly, the second plan was given up and the third chosen. There were, however, other reasons for this choice.

The significance of the march on Metz.

The abandonment of the march on Verdun, and the selection of the direction of Metz, are in themselves acknowledgments of the strategical successes of the Germans up to that date, and they, moreover, afford a proof that their tactical designs had not failed. Bazaine's movement towards Metz is easily to be understood on the hypothesis that the Germans would again attack on the 17th. He may be supposed to have thought, "I have been defeated, my plans have been ruined by the enemy, whom I cannot again meet in the field until I have renewed my strength."

The points of view from which the position was to be selected.

Marshal Bazaine had no intention that the march on Metz should result either in causing him to be shut up for ever in the fortress, or in giving up all possibility of being able to escape from it later on. Under these circumstances, a further question became of importance, namely, whether it would be possible to find near Metz a position of such great tactical strength, that the marshal might there hope to engage in a new battle with some prospect of success. A glance at the map would answer this question (theoretically) in the affirmative, since the position which he had in his eye, and which he actually occupied, was by nature of an exceptional tactical strength. The knowledge of this fact no doubt confirmed the marshal in his decision. If he could now succeed in fortifying this position before the enemy made an attack, he could await events with even greater confidence. It is certainly true that, if he feared to be



attacked on the 17th, while continuing his march on Verdun and Châlons, there was yet more cause for fear, considering the short distance which divided the Germans from the position Roze-riuelles-St. Privat, that he would be again seized by the throat while making the movement, and would be hindered in reaching, in occupying, and in strengthening the position. In the marshal's position there was but one way at his disposal to avoid this danger, namely, by starting as soon as possible; this the marshal at once seized. There was yet another way of escape, but over this he had no power, since it depended upon whether the enemy would permit the withdrawal to take place without interruption. This was, under the circumstances, the most important point of all; but as a matter of fact the marshal had not counted upon it; he expected to be attacked on the 17th.

After the costly battle of the 16th (which, according to Moltke, was also a tactical victory for the Germans), both enemies pursued at once the same object, namely, the avoidance of a fresh battle on the 17th. It is obvious that the marshal would desire this; but he could not suppose that the Germans would wish the same, though he might have taken the possibility into account, since it was not absolutely forbidden by the circumstances. When, indeed, he discovered that the Germans had reasons for avoiding a new battle on the 17th, then first Marshal Bazaine really attained the main conditions for working out his intentions, namely, "an undisturbed retirement on Metz, and an undisturbed occupation and fortification of the chosen position;" but he certainly knew nothing of this beforehand. The Germans, on the 17th and the morning of the 18th, were so completely held back that the marshal could not only have marched undisturbed to the east, but could even—if he had known it—have safely moved the main mass of his army to the north, though he would certainly have thus exposed it later on to new dangers in the field. Critical military history must come to this conclusion, but a general who has to reckon with many uncertainties cannot in the time at his disposal obtain a sufficiently clear view, and cannot act as if he knew everything.

Thus the first cause which enabled Marshal Bazaine to retire at all without being disturbed, was the manner in which the Germans held back; and yet this, under the governing conditions, was thoroughly correct on their part. When, therefore, both sides determined on and carried out that which, in their respective positions, was the right thing to do, namely, to avoid a battle on the 17th, the main advantage, as regards time, the situation, space, and object, belonged at first to the French, while, at a later stage, this relation might very well be reversed, and upon this the German leaders, while the enemy retired, distinctly and decidedly reckoned.

There are no grounds for saying that Marshal Bazaine overlooked the strategical dangers of the position which he selected, because he was dazzled by its tactical advantages; any such statement is contradicted by the dispositions and the plans of the marshal.

The retire-  
ment is  
left un-  
molested.

Bazaine's  
object in  
the battle.

Nevertheless, considering everything, he made one great error in his calculations. This was in underestimating the determination, the tenacity, the energy, and the military skill of the Germans, especially when striving for a great strategical object. Since Bazaine occupied a chosen position, extending from the north to the south, he practically gave up all direct communication with the interior of France; he reversed his front; and took up a "flank" position in the fullest sense of the word. Even though the road by Briey lay exactly in prolongation of St. Privat, it was, considered as a line of march for the French, quite as much within the zone of operations of the Germans as of the French. Though during the battle each had a share in it, this fact merely proved its absolute uselessness for a French retreat, unless they had previously defeated the Germans. Thus only a decided assurance of a great tactical victory could have justified the selection of the position. Bazaine hoped for this, but had he any grounds for entertaining such hopes? He was influenced by the unfounded belief that he had on the 16th been attacked by at least an equal force; yet his telegram, sent to Macmahon at 2 p.m. on the 18th of August, speaks of a German army of reserve on the right bank of the Moselle at Pange. If he believed this to be the fact, he must have said to himself that this army of reserve would come up during the following days, and that he would then (since he imagined the Germans to have been on the 16th at least equal in numbers to his own force) have been obliged to fight against a crushing superiority. In that case, his confidence in a tactical victory, and, therefore, in the consequent freedom of movement, must have vanished away. If the marshal had fully considered the tactical power of fighting, which the Germans had up to that time displayed both in attack and defence, his hope of inflicting a tactical defeat upon them would have rested upon yet more slender foundations.

Bazaine's  
opinions  
and dis-  
positions.

Nevertheless, the marshal's hopes were firmly fixed in this direction, as we learn from his own words. He writes:—

"My idea, when I placed the army of the Rhine in the positions from Rozerieulles to Amanvillers, while giving the most stringent orders that these lines should be very strongly fortified, was to there await the enemy. The preceding actions had shown me that one, or perhaps two, defensive battles, in positions which I considered impregnable, would use up the forces of my adversaries, by causing him to suffer very considerable losses, which, when repeated time after time, would weaken him sufficiently to oblige him to yield me a passage, without his being able to seriously oppose it."

Thus Bazaine considered that, in order to attain his object, more than one defensive battle would be required. In perseverance—at least, as far as intentions went—he was not wanting. But in this matter he allowed a new error to creep in, since he thought, without any reason, that the defensive would weaken the French—in everything which gives power in battle—less than the offensive would affect the Germans, though, taking all things into consideration, military history teaches us that the contrary is the case.



The following telegram, which was sent to Macmahon during the battle, agrees with the above opinions, which the marshal wrote after the event. Bazaine also told almost the truth, and tried to do what was right, as far as he could judge. It runs:—

“In consequence of the successive actions which I have fought, on the 14th and 16th, my march on Verdun has been stopped, and I am obliged to remain in the vicinity of Metz, in order to supply the army with ammunition in the first place, but also with provisions.

“Since this morning the enemy has shown strong masses, which appear to be moving on Briey, and may have an intention to attack Marshal Canrobert, who is occupying St. Privat la Montagne with his left on Amanvillers, on which place the right of the 4th Corps rests. We remain, therefore, again on the defensive, until I have learnt the true direction of the movement of the troops which are in front of us, and, above all, that of the army of the reserve, which is said to be at Pange, under the command of the king, whose head-quarters are probably at the Château d'Aubigny.”

The tactical arrangements made by Marshal Bazaine, according to which the Germans were to exhaust themselves in the attack on his position, show the same line of thought.

For after Bazaine had already issued instructions to the commanders of corps, directing them to strengthen the position as much as possible, he, in consequence of a report received in the early morning at Plappeville from Marshal Leboeuf, concerning the development of considerable forces in front of the 3rd Corps, wrote again at 10 a.m. to Marshal Canrobert (6th Corps at St. Privat) as follows:—

“Occupy your position as strongly as possible, and keep up your connection with the right of the 4th Corps; the troops should be encamped in two lines, and on as narrow a front as possible. You would also do well to have the roads reconnoitred which lead from Marange upon your extreme right, and I am ordering General Ladmirault to do the same with respect to the village of Norroy le Veneur (on the left bank of the Moselle below Metz). If by any chance the enemy, extending along our front, should seem inclined to seriously attack St. Privat la Montagne, take all measures needed for defence in order to hold him there, and to allow the right wing to make a change of front, with the object, if necessary, of occupying the positions in rear, which are now being reconnoitred.”

All this is distinctly in the line of thought on which Marshal Bazaine was at this time acting, and is besides in every way reasoned out in accordance with it, though one single tactical point of view again entails a considerable error. If the position of St. Privat were taken or broken through, there was simply no other position further to the rear, since the lie of the ground does not offer anything of the kind. This was one main defect of the position selected, and owing to this Bazaine lost the battle, as soon as St. Privat had been snatched from his army. The reference to a position further in rear is the more incomprehensible, since Bazaine gives it to be distinctly understood that he was concerned not only with his right flank, but (even

as early as 2 p.m.) with his rear; otherwise, what is the meaning of the mention of Marange and Norroy? If, however, this was really his feeling, Bazaine must have acknowledged to himself that his fate would be decided by one defensive battle.

The execution of the retirement.

Having shown beforehand the connection of these details, in order to collect the various threads, and to avoid later repetitions, we must now deal with the execution of the march of the French. Marshal Bazaine had issued the order for it on the night of the 16th; in this he says:—

“The great expenditure of ammunition which has taken place, and also the fact that we have not supplies for many days, prevent us from continuing the march which has been begun. We shall therefore fall back at once to the plateau of Plappeville.”

The army marched at daybreak on the 17th of August. The main connections, and also the best distribution of the corps for it, were governed by the positions of the army-corps at the end of the battle of the 16th; otherwise the marshal, who considered his left flank as the most important, would perhaps not have placed there, in the foremost line, that corps which of all had suffered the greatest loss in the action (the 2nd Corps), and which, therefore, was of all the least suited to carry out the most difficult task, so far, at any rate, as ordinary experience enables us to judge; we shall speak of this again in the chapter on “The Occupation of the Position.” The Guard, the 2nd and 3rd Corps, marched by the road Rezonville-Gravelotte-Metz, the 4th and 6th by Verneville on Amanvillers and St. Privat. The former road was the better and the wider, and thus the troops could move quicker on it. In order to cover the retirement round Gravelotte, Metman's division of the 3rd Corps took up a position to the west of that village, while Du Barail's cavalry division was at Verneville. The arrangements were in general suitable, though perhaps a stronger force of all arms should have remained near Verneville, since cavalry alone, though they may satisfactorily veil such a movement, cannot cover it or ensure its being carried out. Undoubtedly, also, cavalry were required on the French right flank, in order to scout up to the Orne.

The march to the point north of St. Privat was the longest (about  $8\frac{3}{4}$  miles), that to Point du Jour the shortest (about 5 miles), measured from Rezonville and Bruville. Although the Germans were during the time occupied by this march influenced by the desire to ward off, or rather, to avoid, a battle (which very much facilitated the execution of the movement by the French), we must still acknowledge that the by no means easy task of the latter was carried out without any noteworthy failure as regards their discipline, while their dispositions, the distribution of their troops, and all questions relating to timing, were suitably arranged, and that the entire movement showed not only a very high degree of executive skill, but also a rapidity of marching which had not up to that time been observed in the French troops; moreover, the eccentric direction of the march on Verneville, in comparison with

that of the other on Point du Jour, might easily have led the Germans into erroneous ideas with regard to the real intentions of the enemy. But it does not appear whether the French had any intention of manœuvring with the object of deceiving the Germans; at least, no mention of any such intention can be found in the sources which are at present available.

The advance into the position took place in succession: the 2nd Corps reached it first, and the 6th last, while the former commenced to strengthen it about noon. The general system of occupation on the afternoon of the 17th was as follows:—

The occupation of the position generally.

6th Corps, from Roncourt to the south of St. Privat.

4th Corps, closed up to the former by Amanvillers.

3rd Corps, closed up to the 4th by La Folie, Leipzig, and Moscou.

2nd Corps, from this last point by Point du Jour to Rozerieulles, while Lapasset's brigade of the 5th Corps (which was attached to it) extended thence to Ste. Ruffine.

Du Barail's cavalry division took up a position to the east of St. Privat, while Forton's was at Longeau.

The Guard stood, as a reserve, to the west of the forts St. Quentin and Plappeville, while the reserve artillery was between these forts.

Throughout the whole, as the corps came up in turn, great activity in fortifying the position was shown along the entire front, most of all by the 2nd and 3rd Corps, less by the 4th, and least by the 6th, where it was most needed. Generally speaking, the troops on the 18th remained posted as given above. We will here dismiss this subject, of which such details and changes as call for notice will be mentioned later on.

What do we learn from the above statement?

The marshal wished neither to be torn away from Metz nor to be driven back into that fortress, but simply to remain connected with it on political and other grounds (ammunition, supplies, sick and wounded), and to protect and strengthen himself, while relying upon and supported by it. Do his dispositions correspond with these objects? The French position was by nature very strong along the entire front, and was undoubtedly strongest (as will be shown later in the chapter on "The Character of the Ground") on its left, though the right also was capable of being energetically defended. The marshal should certainly therefore have considered the possibility of the latter flank being turned; in fact, as we have already shown, he did reckon on this. On the other hand, there was comparatively little reason for him to fear for his left flank.

Inconsistency of Bazaine's objects in the battle.

When the marshal, nevertheless, placed the reserve of his army in rear of his left, this disposition (especially when considered with regard to the support already afforded to him at that point by the forts of St. Quentin and Plappeville) distinctly shows his politico-strategical object. He was determined not, under any circumstances, to be cut off from Metz. But the second task which he set himself, namely, not to be thrown back upon the fortress, is in direct contradiction to this disposition of his troops; thus, as we have here shown, it was impossible to carry out both of these tasks. This the

marshal discovered, but not until it was too late, at 3 p.m. on the 18th of August, and he then accordingly made fresh dispositions; but the distance of the main army reserve from his right was then far too great to allow them to be of use. If the marshal's right flank were defeated and driven in, in that case, even though his left was successful, he must fail to carry out his entire object. In other words, the two aims, as the marshal sought to gain them, need not of themselves, without other considerations, have been incompatible with each other (as has been well shown theoretically), but, under the then existing circumstances, and considering the strength of the force at his disposal, and also their distribution in the position, their realization was not possible. Even if the main reserve had arrived in time at St. Privat on the 18th, the defeat of the right wing would at the best have been simply prevented on that day, while the overthrow which must have followed on the 19th would, on the other hand, have been still more serious to the French; this can be shown by merely stating the disposition of the troops on the evening of the 18th. The Germans had still a corps (the 10th) in the second line, and ready to renew the fight on the 19th, and had, moreover, the 3rd in the centre and the two corps, the 7th and 8th, on their right, while the French had no reserves worth mention available for further action. It is therefore very probable that, under these circumstances, Bazaine would on the 19th have been not only thrown back upon Metz by the German left, but would further have been cut off from the fortress by the German right, since the 2nd and 3rd French Corps had altogether only two infantry regiments in reserve, though the last Voltigeur brigade of the Guard might have been also employed. Under such conditions, these corps could not have endured a second day of battle.

Bazaine's double intention required for its execution: 1st, an active general, who understood how to take advantage of the success of the moment; 2nd, a skilful guidance of the battle; 3rd, a suitable distribution of the corps and a proper disposition of the reserves; 4th, a well-selected position for the leader of the battle; 5th, the greatest possible strengthening of the position by artificial means. All these were wanting.

Criticism  
of the posi-  
tion with  
reference to  
Bazaine's  
objects.

Strategically considered, the position itself was in the fullest sense of the word essentially a "flank" position; the natural line of retreat was abandoned, while any other (from the Moselle) would have placed the marshal in a disadvantageous strategical situation. The enemy could not pass by the position; he was compelled to pay attention to it, and to make the strong hostile force on his flank as far as possible harmless, before he could, for his part, dream of any further plans for operations. The great fortress of Metz was in the eyes of the marshal a reason for taking up a flank position; he could rest his left upon it in such a manner that he need fear nothing serious on that flank; it further supported his centre in carrying out his intention "to bleed the enemy, and thus to obtain freedom of action." Again, it compelled the Germans to leave considerable forces (1st Corps and 3rd Cavalry Division) on the right bank of

the Moselle; while Bazaine had, along the entire front of his left and supported flank, ground which it was very difficult for the assailant to pass over, even without any considerable preparations being made for defence, since it was composed of the steep and deep ravine of the Mance, with its large masses of thick forest; moreover, if the enemy proposed to attack it, that attack must take place in the direction from which the marshal most desired it, and must be carried out against that which was tactically the strongest part of the whole line of battle.

The position, however, wanted depth, and also suitable and sufficient communications, either in case it was required to push the reserves to the front, or in case of the necessity of a general retirement. In addition to its insufficient depth, and to its want of communications, the position had close in its rear, for three parts of its length, the deep valley of Châtel, which ran about parallel to the Mance Ravine; this obstructed all movement, and might have been fatal to a retreat. It is true, certainly, that the forts of Metz (St. Quentin and Plappeville) lay so near to the valley that, unless the victorious enemy could pursue along the foot of the slope, the disadvantages as regards a retreat of the French army would be much diminished.

The selection of a "flank" position can only be considered desirable, if the general desires to again assume the offensive, after having been temporarily subject to the will of the enemy, and after having lost the initiative. He takes it up, not with the intention of simply warding off a blow, but in the hope of again obtaining liberty of decision and of action through the process of time, or by other fortunate circumstances. For this a strong army is needed; this Bazaine had. But, in addition, a great, daring, skilful, and decided general is necessary, as well as a careful and skilfully arranged system of orders, and a suitable disposition of the troops; these requirements were not sufficiently fulfilled.

Strategically speaking, the assailant of a flank position must place himself under conditions similarly unfavourable to those of the foe to be attacked (I designedly do not here use the word "defender," since that would not be the right expression), with regard to his communications to the rear. Since the Germans could not neglect his flank position, the question presented itself to the marshal whether, considering the stage of the strategical concentration of the enemy, he was the man, or his army was qualified, to destroy this concentration, and to aim at great results against the strategical flank of the Germans, by throwing himself during the concentration, or during the earlier stages of the subsequent battle, in superior strength and in the most effective direction, upon the communications of the enemy. If the marshal were not the man for this, and if the position, the number, and the disposition of his troops were not suitable, the flank position must have more drawbacks than advantages for him, and must be but the beginning of the end, since in that case, without considering other matters, all utilization of the strategical advantages, which under such circumstances might have allowed him to hope for



success, must be renounced. As a matter of fact, however, Bazaine no more thought of breaking out in the direction of Gravelotte than he thought of letting Metz take care of itself, throwing himself upon the German communications on the right bank of the Moselle, and using Metz as a pivot for his right; this would have been a task worthy of a true general. When he abandoned Gravelotte without a struggle, he entirely abandoned such possibility of success as lay in the offensive, since for this the possession of Gravelotte would have been most necessary. His measures can therefore be explained only by political reasons.

Bazaine thus, by his arrangements, left out of consideration the important portions of the task of an army which is assembled in a flank position; he himself diminished his sphere of effect, and, abandoning the paths of strategy, limited himself to those of political tactics. He posted his main reserve (the Guard, etc.) in such a manner that, in spite of the surrender of Gravelotte, one is at first sight, under the existing circumstances, compelled to believe in an intention to take the offensive in the direction of that village. But even this has only a political explanation, namely, that Bazaine feared that the object of the Germans was to cut him off from Metz; whereas, sound strategy for the Germans could only consist in entirely cutting the communications of the French army, in order, perhaps, at a later date, to throw them back into Metz. The passage of the Moselle by the Germans to the south of Metz must have appeared to Bazaine, if he had considered only military aims, as the commencement of a predetermined operation of this description.

In order not to be separated from Metz, Bazaine not only placed his reserve in rear of his left, but further selected that point for his own post, in order personally to be near that which he considered to be his most threatened flank. Let us see what Moltke says with regard to this point. He thus speaks with respect to the position:—"He (Bazaine) had preferred to assemble his forces near Metz in a position which he rightly considered as almost impregnable." With regard to the posting of the reserves, he says: "This point (St. Privat) should undoubtedly have been the position for the Guard, but in his apprehension of an attack from the south, the marshal kept this reserve behind Plappeville." All this can be explained on political grounds, but Bazaine the politician required a victory, and therefore the offensive. There was, in fact, no harmony between the political and the military sides of the question.

Bazaine really sought for nothing more than to hold his position, allowing the enemy to rush upon it, in order to weaken him by a costly defeat. For this purpose the position, tactically considered, had great natural advantages, while, with regard to what was done to strengthen it, as well as all his other dispositions, all, from a military point of view, had reference solely to a purely defensive action, and in no way showed any intention to himself assume the offensive.

Yet any one who, being in a flank position, selects the pure defensive, or who can only attain that scale of action, places himself

in opposition to the conditions which justify the occupation of such a position, namely, the assumption of the offensive under favourable circumstances, whether tactical or strategical or both; moreover, experience teaches us that in the above cases flank positions, whether they be named Jena or Metz, bring about great catastrophes.

At the very point, on the French left flank, where the conditions regarding freedom of movement for bodies of troops ought undoubtedly to have existed, or to have been created, such conditions were quite insufficient; the same disadvantage indeed made itself felt along the whole of the French front, since the depth of the formation was small in proportion to its length. This arose from a circumstance of which it was desired to take advantage, namely, the excellence of the arm of the French infantry, which demanded a wide field of fire. Moreover, the general direction of the position was governed by the lie of the high ground between Point du Jour and St. Privat. The woods which lay before the centre, and especially in front of the left, could not, however, be considered as tactically advantageous to an army which had determined to fight in a flank position; since these expanses of wood, with their narrow roads, would (even if the French had held Gravelotte) have led, in the case of an offensive carried out through them, to the same difficulties as seriously embarrassed the German offensive. At the same time, however, the woods and the Mance Ravine together, if only the Germans had known how to make good use of them both, would have offered them the main condition under which they could carry out a successful attack upon an impregnable position.

As things were, a French offensive would have been easiest in the direction from St. Privat on Batilly, etc., that is to say in the direction which was least effective strategically.

## IV.

THE OBJECTS WHICH THE GERMANS PROPOSED TO ATTAIN BY THEIR MOVEMENTS AND BY THE BATTLE. THEIR DISPOSITIONS FOR BOTH.

The general position on the morning of the 17th of August.

AFTER having in the preceding chapter noticed the intentions of the French leaders, and the dispositions made to carry them out, we add now a short sketch of those of the Germans. In doing this it is impossible to avoid criticizing the principles which governed the headquarters and the 2nd Army. I have, nevertheless, dealt as shortly as possible with the latter, since the dispositions of which the fight of the 1st Army in the Mance Ravine was the consequence naturally demand our principal attention in this work.

By the battle of the 14th of August the Germans had gained considerable strategical advantage, since, owing to it, generally speaking, the 1st and 2nd Armies had interrupted the intended and pre-arranged retreat of the enemy's forces, and had delayed it about thirty-six hours.\* The German leaders skilfully employed this time in making the most of their interior lines, inasmuch as they at once commenced to endeavour to overtake the French army by means of operations to the south of Metz; and, further, to pass it wherever possible, and to compel it to fight again. The enemy's army, which after the battle of the 14th, had resumed its retreat on Verdun, was again attacked on the 16th by the 2nd German Army, and this time on its left flank. The strategical successes of the 16th of August were for the Germans simply decisive of the *whole campaign*. The French army lost the Metz-Vionville-Verdun road; it had suffered severe loss in the actions, and had expended much ammunition; its march was again interrupted and delayed.

Under these circumstances, as has been already shown, Marshal Bazaine had finally abandoned his march on Verdun, and, resting his left on Metz, had taken up a position on the eastern heights of the Mance Valley. This position lay north and south. Marshal Bazaine had thus given up his direct communications with Verdun and Châlons. Presuming that the Germans took advantage of these facts, both enemies would fight facing their proper rear. If Marshal Bazaine were victorious, the Germans would lose their line of communications; while, if the Germans won, their enemy would presumably be thrown back upon the entrenched camp of Metz. Bazaine's position, strategically considered, had much in common with that of the Prussians at

\* Moltke calculated the delay at one day, which the 2nd and 3rd Army had thus gained on the enemy.

Jena, in 1806, since both were flank positions. The manner in which the French were attacked by the Germans differed, however, considerably from that used by Napoleon against the Prussians. A more exact example of a similar attack is to be found in Sherman's engagement at Atlanta, and the results of the operations and of the battles were in these two cases almost the same.

The action of the 16th of August had called up King William to Flavigny, which was on the battle-field, by about 6 a.m. on the 17th. After care had been taken, as early as the evening of the 16th, that the Germans should, in case of a second battle on the 17th, be prepared in good time to meet the French (in the neighbourhood of the battle-field of the 16th), with at least equal numerical strength, the grand head-quarters watched the course of events from Flavigny. From that point King William, at noon, determined to advance on the following day in concentrated strength, and, in consequence of this decision, the following orders were issued from the height of Flavigny at 2 p.m. on the 17th:—

"The 2nd Army will close up at 5 a.m. to-morrow, the 18th of August, and will advance in echelon from the left between the Yron and the Gorze brooks, on a general line between Ville sur Yron and Rezonville. The 8th Corps will conform to this movement on the right flank of the 2nd Army. The 7th Corps will at the beginning have the duty of covering the movements of the 2nd Army against any attempts of the enemy from Metz. Further orders from his Majesty will depend upon the action of the enemy. Reports to his Majesty will be at first sent to the heights of Flavigny." Order for the movements of the 18th of August.

"(Signed) v. MOLTKE."

This order was at once despatched to the leaders of the 1st and 2nd Armies; the 1st Army, with which we are especially concerned, received it about 4 p.m., just as General von Steinmetz reached Ars. In no other instance have Moltke's great designs been so clearly expressed in an order as was the case here. Great and little "strategists" (especially in France, Russia, and Austria) have in this order been able to recognize Moltke only as a strategical methodist, who allowed too little for the unforeseen in strategy. On easily intelligible grounds there has formerly been no inclination to oppose these views. These grounds have now lost their value, and history may claim her rights. I shall examine the order from this point of view, and it will then appear how unfounded the written and the spoken opinions are, how this order for the operations took full account of the unforeseen, and in how high a degree it, under the not altogether harmonious circumstances which prevailed at the time of its issue, is and will remain always a work of art. Criticism of this order. Effect of the king's age.

The order was issued at 2 p.m., at an hour when there was as yet no certainty with regard to the movements or the intentions of the enemy. How is this early hour to be explained? The king had been on the Flavigny heights since 6 a.m. Pont à Mousson is about 14 miles, as the crow flies, from this height, and the king had come from there; thus, considering the age of the royal leader, the

day had by 2 p.m. been already a very hard one, and a desire to take rest is quite intelligible. What the coming day might bring forth lay hidden in the future; but in any case the Germans intended to attack, and thus fresh exertions would be called for on the part of the king, of a kind which would, as a rule, be too great for a man of his age. Considering this, not only temporary but as far as possible complete rest was desirable for the king on the 17th of August. But neither temporary nor complete rest could, considering his great age, be obtained in the neighbourhood of Flavigny, since there was no suitable accommodation for the head-quarters, and the larger buildings in the immediate vicinity were full of wounded. Shelter for the night could certainly have been found in Novéant, which was much nearer than Pont à Mousson, and which had good communications; but, since it was not possible to remain on the field of battle, the greater distance to the latter place was accepted in addition. Since this decision was arrived at on grounds which, considering the circumstances, were intelligible, it was necessary to make a timely return to Pont à Mousson in order that the required rest should not be too long delayed.

The direct consequence of all this was the very early issue (2 p.m.) of the orders at Flavigny. The head-quarters thus moved on the 17th from Pont à Mousson to Flavigny and back, and returned on the 18th from Pont à Mousson to Flavigny; thus in exactly 24 hours it moved  $42\frac{1}{2}$  miles in rear of the armies. On the other hand, it is nearly 9 miles from Flavigny to Auboué. A general, such as Napoleon I., who was in the habit of himself observing the enemy, would on the 17th of August have ridden to Auboué and back ( $17\frac{1}{2}$  miles), and would in this case have learnt almost everything on that day. The time available after 3 p.m., the hour of the evacuation of Gravelotte, would have fully sufficed for this. Moreover, according to the order of 2 p.m., the 2nd Army was to move in the zone between Flavigny and Auboué.

A younger general would also have awaited on the field the receipt of the last reports, and would perhaps have spent the night between the 17th and the 18th of August among his troops. It was impossible to ask so much in the present case. For the last reports are not usually so distinct that a conclusion can be drawn from them, without having the result of the day before one, while this implies that the night is broken into, since the result of the day cannot be known until the evening. When the above-mentioned order was issued at Flavigny, Rezonville had been (at 11 a.m.) abandoned by the French, but Gravelotte and Verneville were still occupied by them up to 3 p.m. The order of 2 p.m. seems, therefore, to have been too early as regards its time of issue, while with respect to the position of the enemy it was written under premature and uncertain conditions. This is true; but it is also true that Moltke recognized this, and allowed for it in his draft. It is, of course, necessary to understand how to read between the lines of his strategy.

This must be clearly but very briefly shown. Ever since daylight on the 17th the French line of outposts had been seen, in part from



Flavigny, to extend from Rezonville to Bruville. This Prince Frederic Charles knew from 4.30 a.m., and the king from 6 a.m. At a later hour, from about 6 a.m., heavy white clouds of dust were visible from Flavigny, and continued visible until the afternoon; these clouds passed from the west towards the east. In the mean time not only were these clouds to be seen from Flavigny, but also repeated crowdings and passages of troops in and around Rezonville; these arose from the corps (mentioned in the preceding chapter), which were falling back on Gravelotte. It was certainly impossible to determine from Flavigny what units of troops were marching towards the east; but both Prince Frederic Charles and the king must have been perfectly aware that they were strong masses, and that they were moving in the direction of Metz. The distance between Flavigny and Rezonville is about 2200 yards, and the above knowledge was possessed before 11 a.m., the hour of the completion of the evacuation of Rezonville. Colonel von Wartensleben had been allowed by the very highest authority to inform General von Steinmetz (1st Army) that it had been ascertained from Flavigny that "the enemy, who is in great part withdrawing upon Metz, is still in possession of Rezonville and Gravelotte"; this must, therefore, have been before 11 a.m. As far as the generals who were at Flavigny could see and judge from that place, they had a full knowledge, and had formed an accurate judgment, on all the above points concerning the enemy. This is very important. The same generals left the cavalry here, that is to say close up to the enemy, and troopers sent forward towards Rezonville continued to receive fire from that place up to 11 a.m.; in other words, the enemy was still there. The same was the case when the enemy had abandoned Rezonville, and the cavalry endeavoured to observe him at Gravelotte; but before this took place the order for the movements had been issued.

On the other hand, it was impossible to see from Flavigny what the enemy were doing towards the north. This was an opportunity for officers' patrols. But these seem to have been scarcely used at all, while the pushing forward of whole squadrons, as has been said over and over again, was quite out of place. Scouts sent forward at this point brought back very contradictory reports; some said "the enemy is retiring on Jarny," while others stated that the retirement was "on the road to Verneville," that is to say, in two entirely opposed directions. If these reports had been compared at Flavigny with what had been there observed and fixed, taking into consideration the long duration of the French passage through Rezonville and Gravelotte—from 5 a.m. to 2 p.m.—which had been observed by the 1st Army, and reported to Flavigny, even in the words, "Artillery are withdrawing through the infantry positions," circumstances all spoke in favour of a march on Verneville, unless the Germans were prepared to believe in a division of the enemy's forces. It remained then only to decide what was going on at Verneville, and until this had been decided without a doubt, no order should have been issued. Little was done to find this out. About 8 a.m. it was reported that the enemy was standing on the west of Gravelotte, with a cavalry

brigade at Verneville. (It was not a cavalry brigade, but du Barail's cavalry division). Count Haeseler, who was sent forward to reconnoitre in consequence of this report, formed the impression that the troops at Gravelotte were only a rear-guard; in this he was right. This must have been at about 11 a.m.

At 5.45 a.m. an enemy's camp at Bruville was observed and reported by the 11th Hussars. This was also quite correct; but the second part of the report, which said that the troops were about to march from St. Marcel or Verdun, was incorrect. Between 10 and 11 a.m. advanced patrols of the same regiment observed "clouds of dust between Doncourt and Jouaville," from which it was again concluded that the retirement was on Metz. This was the only information which General von Moltke had at his disposal at 2 p.m. Even though the French movement on Verneville was exactly and correctly perceived on the strength of the last report, it was still possible for the German head-quarters, in consequence of the other repeated reports, to believe in the march on Jarny. This important portion of the task remained, unfortunately, uncertain, ill-executed, and unfinished.

On this point Moltke says:—

"The reports which were received from the cavalry up to noon were partly contradictory; they did not enable an opinion to be formed whether the French were concentrating on Metz, or whether they were retiring by the two roads which still remained open, by Etain and Briey. No movements of attack were, however, observed."

And further:—

"Already by 9 a.m. the Saxon cavalry division had reached the road to Etain to the west of Conflans, and had reported that no enemy except stragglers were there visible, from which it might be concluded that the French had not continued their retreat on the 17th."

They might, however, have wished to do so on the 18th.

Since Moltke thus judged the case, the order for the operations had to take into account both a concentration of the French at Metz and a possible retreat of the army, or of a part of it, on the 18th. Therefore the above report was especially important with regard to the wording of the order issued.

Proba-  
bility and  
improba-  
bility of  
the objects  
of the  
enemy.

The selection of the position for the head-quarters at Flavigny, and the long time that they remained there, from 6 a.m. on the 17th to 2 p.m. on the 18th, can be explained by the fact that, up to 10.30 a.m. on the 18th the head-quarters believed rather in a retreat of the enemy in a northerly direction, than in his presence in the neighbourhood of Metz. It was not until the battle had grown hot that the head-quarters placed themselves in rear of the 1st Army. With regard to the question which is disputed among many critics, whether it was possible for Marshal Bazaine to have moved to the north or the north-west after the 16th, either with his whole army or with a part, no higher authority can be quoted in favour of an unqualified affirmative than Field-Marshal Moltke himself, whose

order of 2 p.m. on the 17th accepted this idea to the fullest extent. This I mention only by the way. Whether, on the other hand, it was right to so consider it, and yet to order nothing which might stop, disturb, or delay the retreat which was taking place, is a question which must be answered later. As far as the Germans were concerned, it would have been, theoretically, more promising to hold the enemy fast, than to allow him to draw off, in order to overtake him after concentration. Experience teaches us that retreating armies move faster than those which pursue, and, therefore, if the French had marched well, it would have been necessary for the Germans to give up, in the first place, the concentration of the 17th, unless it was expected to fight the French to the south of the Orne.

General von Moltke represented a school—indeed, he was himself the school. He thus regarded everything which the enemy could and must do from the point of view of this school. According to this school, the enemy was to be expected to do that which would be of the greatest advantage to him; on the other hand, Moltke had, at that time, no reason to imagine that Bazaine would be guided by political considerations. An approach towards Metz, with the object of forcing on a decision close to that place, must of necessity expose the French to distinct strategical disadvantages. That Bazaine should do such a thing appeared to the great strategist Moltke in no way to be counted on, just as Napoleon I., in the days before Jena, thought it incredible that the Prussians would remain behind the Saale. Napoleon at the time determined, and held to his determination, to fight the Prussians at Gera. He notoriously governed all his operations against the Prussians by this consideration, and was unable to believe in the occurrence of the most improbable until he had failed to find the Prussians at Gera. Then he certainly swung round to the left, developed an astonishing activity and mobility, and thereby personally threw light upon the situation. As a matter of fact, the French, up to the 18th of August, 1870, had always done the most unlikely thing; they had done that which strategically might bring them into the very greatest danger, and no general, such as Napoleon or Moltke, could believe this without proofs. We must always, if we wish to judge justly, keep before our eyes a quite correct conception of what the enemy should have done. This must be the starting-point.

Moltke's order of 2 p.m. on the 17th was founded upon this, and Moltke expected the enemy to do what was correct, and held fast to this expectation, exactly as Napoleon I. did at Gera.

The order for the movement was, however, so drawn up that it must on the 18th of August lead the Germans past the French, though not to the same extent as was the case with Napoleon I. and the Prussians, in 1806. This was, therefore, less worthy of blame in Moltke than in Napoleon I.; and no real criticism is possible until we consider the personal omissions of the head-quarters, whose part, under such conditions, in front of an existing position, will be exactly the same a thousand years hence as it was with Napoleon I. on the 13th and 14th of October, 1806. The method of leading in war does

not affect the question in any way. When Napoleon I. saw that he had made a mistake, he gave himself no rest until he had remedied his error, and that before the battle. Moltke did nothing of the kind before the battle. If he and his royal master had, however, been thirty years younger, they would also have acted as Napoleon I. did before the battle, and they would have been able to correct their mistaken views more quickly and more easily than he did, since the distances were much shorter than that between Gera and Jena, while circumstances were also more clear, the days were longer, and the means for giving direction and information were much more numerous and better trained. Though we may not blame Moltke because he refused to believe in what was most improbable, until he had been convinced that the enemy really intended it, still we must not refuse to allot blame that so much time was required to show that what was most improbable was what was going to happen. This was due to omissions on the part of the whole machinery of reconnaissance, both as regards the arm specially detailed for it, the cavalry, and also the generals and their General Staff officers. The most incredible things come to pass in war. A methodical mind finds great difficulty in dealing with them; a conscientious man finds this always more difficult than does a daring and nomad conqueror. The incredible and the unforeseen twice puzzled Moltke; before the decision to march upon Sedan, and even while that march was going on, he was observed to hold strongly to that which the enemy ought to have done, until at last all doubt became impossible. At Gravelotte Moltke marched past the French, although since the 16th an unbroken fire-fight had raged upon the right flank; before the operations upon Sedan the two enemies nearly marched by each other.

Choice of  
the post  
for the  
head-  
quarters.

Any one who has been on the ground knows that Flavigny, if the possibility of what actually happened were considered, and the French did not continue their march, was much too far from Gravelotte, when Rezonville had been abandoned, about 11 a.m. What then took place at Gravelotte could not be observed from Flavigny, nor could anything be seen of the eastern heights of the Mance Valley, since Flavigny was a good 6600 yards from Gravelotte. The hill did not afford the required facilities for observation in all directions; since before the issue of the orders the enemy were believed to extend from Point du Jour to Leipzig, it would have been well to ride forward from Flavigny in the direction of Verneville, in order from that point to examine La Folie and Montigny la Grange. It could also have been discovered from the general staff maps in their possession that the heights to the south-west of that point were the highest in the neighbourhood, and that it might be possible from them to obtain an excellent view of everything, since the whole country to the east and north-east of that point might be called open and easy to be surveyed in comparison with the southern part of the French position. This could certainly not have been done before 2 p.m., but after that there still remained five or six hours for a reconnaissance! The hill of Verneville appears from that of Flavigny to slightly jut out.

These considerations must not be held to be merely wisdom after the event, nor are they only the theoretical fruit of the writing-table, they concern matters which can be dealt with in the saddle, according to place, time, and circumstances, things with which every general would feel himself called upon to reckon, since they are the most natural, and since they include in themselves the questions which must be answered before anything further can be done. Another omission of the same kind also took place. Action in the above direction was the more simple, since it might have been guessed that the commander of the 1st Army, General von Steinmetz, was at least in the neighbourhood of Gravelotte, with the object of reconnoitring the ground, or of having it reconnoitred from that point. It was obvious from the map that the eastern heights of the Mance Valley could be observed from Gravelotte; as a matter of fact, General von Steinmetz, during the afternoon of the 17th, obtained a sufficient and complete view over the enemy who were in front of him; this result certainly did not reach the head-quarters until they had arrived again at Pont à Mousson.

It is remarkable that the order for the movement which was issued at 2 p.m. refers really only to the 2nd Army, and that the 1st Army, as such, is not named in it. This more particularly affected General von Steinmetz, as the commander of the 1st Army, since direct orders were given in it to two of his corps (the 7th and 8th), and the reasons for this were not added to the order.

Omission  
of the  
commander  
of the 1st  
Army.

The orders to the 2nd Army are most to be blamed.

Orders to  
the 2nd  
Army.

We here miss the necessary clearness and exactness, and it is impossible to discover how far the 2nd Army was intended to advance; moreover, the order contains no distinct mandate. It is impossible to find out from it whether the 2nd Army was to attack or not; for the order says only, "advance to."

All this was neither forgotten nor overlooked by Moltke, but these things were intentionally not mentioned, and the order was intentionally written exactly in this manner and not otherwise. It is also quite clear and exact, though certainly with a silent supposition which is not mentioned in the order, namely, that the enemy is rather to the northward than to the eastward. The 7th Corps is at first "to cover the movement on the side of Metz." When the 2nd Army and the 8th Corps of the 1st took up their direction towards the north, not as a position, but as a march, how ought the 7th Corps to carry out this covering? Was it to remain halted, or not? As it stood at 2 p.m. on the 17th—Ars-sur-Moselle, Vaux, the Mance mill, and the northern edge of the Bois de Vaux—it could cover nothing, though certainly since early on the 17th General von Steinmetz knew from Count Wartensleben that "the 7th Corps was to advance on Gravelotte." From the fact that the 8th Corps, in accordance with the later order, was "to follow the movement on the right flank," General von Steinmetz might very well conclude that the 7th was not to close up to the former corps, but was to remain halted facing towards Metz, otherwise probably the 7th Corps would not alone have been named. Steinmetz thus read the order!



I shall show later on that Moltke did not mean it to be so understood, since at 4 a.m. of the 18th of August Moltke answered, "The concentration . . . can only be carried out to the front." Moltke therefore intended the "covering" not to take place until after one march; that is to say, after the passage of the valley of the Mance from the neighbourhood of Gravelotte. It is, however, under the governing circumstances, no disadvantage that the order does not contain this information. Again, the 7th Corps was not to cover the movement throughout, but only "at the beginning." This was a fresh stumbling-block to General von Steinmetz. Since the expression, "at the beginning," seemed to him to imply another later movement, perhaps a march by which it would close up to the 8th Corps, or possibly an energetic attack towards Metz, etc.

The direction of the march of the 2nd Army and of the 8th Corps makes another important matter evident, namely, that Moltke, at 2 p.m. on the 17th of August, believed that the enemy was (i.) in a northerly direction, and (ii.) on the hither side of the Orne. The direction of the march teaches us that the first was the case; the second is proved by the remark of Prince Frederic Charles, who, when he issued his orders, said that it was a matter of "only a few miles of march." Since Moltke, at 2 p.m. on the 17th of August, assumed that the enemy was in a northerly direction, he neither gave an object for the march, nor any other instruction than "to advance" and "to push on." Matters were not altogether clear on the right, and, in order that in this direction, also, everything might go well, the "advance in echelon from the left" was ordered. Moltke certainly anticipated the results which the "Official Account" considers to have been due to this, namely, that this order ensured the possibility, either of obliging the enemy to fight, with Belgium lying only two days' marches in his rear, or to do the same, by wheeling to the east, in case the foe had fallen back upon Metz. In any case this intention might have been later attributed to it without any difficulty, since the armies which were concentrated for this purpose in Moltke's hand actually succeeded in carrying it all out. But therein lay the genius of the order, and without these considerations it would not have been drawn up as it was.

Could Moltke, then, at 2 p.m. on the 17th of August, really and decidedly reckon that the enemy, after the costly action of the 16th, would take up a position near Metz? Could he anticipate that the enemy would run short of ammunition and supplies, and that he would consider his army to be in no fit condition to fight again in the open field on the 17th, 18th, or 19th? To say nothing of Bazaine's political schemes; but no one could know them at that time. It was undoubtedly right, strategically speaking, to expect to find the enemy to the northward, since that was the direction in which the movement of the enemy was likely to have the least dangerous consequences. Moreover, so long as it was not proved that the enemy was not in the north, Moltke acted on a correct strategical idea; indeed, he had nothing but his own ideas to guide him as to where the enemy retired when he abandoned his positions

of the 16th. In this matter Moltke undoubtedly made a mistake. If from Rezonville as a centre a circle be described, with a radius equal to the distance between that place and Ville sur Yron, it will fall somewhere about St. Ail, and will have a diameter of 6½ miles. Although the 8th Corps was directed to "close up to the right flank of the 2nd Army," it was undoubtedly implied that the right flank of the 2nd Army would remain at Rezonville, and that the probable point of junction of the 8th Corps lay, and was intended to lie, at that place; but since the 2nd Army was to advance between Rezonville and Ville sur Yron, and was thus to move, it must of necessity leave Rezonville behind it. Nevertheless, Goeben cleverly and luckily got over this difficulty, for he moved upon Rezonville, from which point he could act as circumstances might require. As a matter of fact, the right wing of the 2nd Army (the 9th Corps) moved as far as the neighbourhood of Caulre Farm, with the object of there changing front to the east.

Considering the unfavourable character of the situation, and under the pressure of the then existing circumstances, it is remarkable that there is in the order not a single word with respect to the employment of the cavalry, and no mention of reconnaissance or scouting. If it be said that this should have been naturally the duty of the two army staffs, we must, on the other hand, protest against this idea, as a matter of principle, under the circumstances. In support of this opinion we may quote how Napoleon would have behaved under such conditions, and this must be accepted as a pattern for all time. In such cases the head-quarters must assume the command of the independent cavalry, and must supply the army staffs with the latter. This is exactly what happened after Gravelotte. But the cavalry, on the 17th, not only received no orders from the head-quarters, but were even drawn back behind the deployed 2nd Army. Thus the 2nd Army also forgot to make use of them at the very moment when, if they had been suitably employed, full information might have been obtained in a few hours, and when the results of their action might have been easily reported to the ruling powers, if the latter had remained on the scene of action, and, even as things were, might have been sent to Pont à Mousson by 10 p.m. Unfortunately, General von Steinmetz also was already in Ars by 4 p.m.; it is uncertain at what hour Prince Frederic Charles took up his quarters at Buxières.

Everything considered, there is in truth not one of the orders signed by Moltke which is, given the time and the circumstances, so entirely opposed to his idea of what such things should be as this is; yet if we realize the considerations which governed its issue, the order of 2 p.m. is, always excepting the omission to mention the employment of the cavalry, a work of genius, which shows us how Moltke so thoroughly understood how to act in an unfavourable situation, that he on the one hand took into account the consequences of the age of the royal leader, without, on the other, jeopardizing anything for the following day. These two considerations exclude any agreement which could be in all respects harmonious. So far, however, as human

No mention of the task of the cavalry.

The order a work of genius.

genius could suffice for such a task, Moltke's foresight and grasp of the situation were equal to the demands made on them.

The space  
available.

The space between Rezonville and Ville-sur-Yron, about 6½ miles, was certainly scarcely enough for five army-corps and four cavalry divisions, though, owing to the advance being made by massed corps in echelon, this was of less importance. Moreover, the direction laid down took careful account of very various strategical points of view. For if the enemy were found on the 18th in the direction of the Orne, he could be duly met; while, if he happened to be on the right flank of the 2nd Army as it marched, it was possible to wheel to meet him. Neither the one case nor the other could, supposing that sufficient means existed for carrying orders, cause any great difficulty; while although the order was issued before the situation was clear, and thus, in the second case, it was not so effective against Bazaine's true and actual position (as it showed itself later on), yet the front of march of the 2nd Army, even if it was wheeled as soon as at Rezonville, would reach to St. Ail.

Moltke speaks as follows concerning his intentions on the 17th:—

"The dispositions for the fight which was expected on the 18th of August had to take account of two possible cases.

"In order to meet both, the left wing had to advance in a northerly direction against the first line of retreat which was still open to the French, that is, to Doncourt. If the enemy was caught actually on the march, he was to be immediately attacked and held fast, while the right wing was to come up afterwards in support.

"If, however, the enemy remained near Metz, the left wing was to change front to the east, and to turn the flank of his position from the north, while the right wing, until the above became possible, was to carry on only a delaying fight. In this case, owing to the wide circumferential movement of part of the army, the battle would presumably not be decided until late in the day. Moreover, it would be fought under the unusual condition, that thus both sides would engage facing to their rear, and would, to begin with, abandon their communications. By this the consequences of victory or of defeat would be greatly enhanced, though in this respect the French had the advantage of being based upon a large fortress which could aid them in various ways.

"The resolution was fixed, and the order for the advance by echelons from the left was issued from Flavigny as early as 2 p.m. The direction of the individual corps during the battle was to depend upon the information received."

We can add nothing to this; and only those who have not sufficient time to study the question in Moltke's writings will object to the words "as early as," since they are full of self-criticism.

The ex-  
planation.

It must be admitted that the varying strategical conditions demanded corresponding measures on the part of the 2nd Army. Unfortunately the explanation entirely neglected to say so on the 17th of August, and consequently on the 18th, serious vacillation and complications arose which caused considerable loss of time. Since this army was to play an active part, was to move, and was to hold the enemy, or to attack him by a change of front, their peculiar task

should have been, especially considering the uncertain condition of the general situation, to obtain the most trustworthy information possible, in order to make sure that the later orders should be judicious and suitable. This was neglected. No doubt this was to some extent due to the consideration that an action might thus be brought about on the 17th, an event which was by no means desired by the Germans. But too much importance was attributed to this consideration; there was a reprehensible backwardness in seeing and reporting, with the result that nothing was done on the 17th to elucidate the situation.

Moltke himself considered his order of 2 p.m. as somewhat insufficient. He says in the order, "The further instructions of his Majesty the King will depend upon the action of the enemy." Was not this a distinct invitation to both armies to ascertain and report in time the "action of the enemy"? Everything in the then situation depended upon that! For only when this had been done could fuller directions be given, or the real orders for the battle be given. In the hope, and with the reasonable expectation that full information would be obtained, Moltke wished to be back again at Flavigny by the early morning of the 18th, and thence to issue the "further instructions."

When the order of 2 p.m. reached General von Steinmetz, the general—according to the "Official Account"—had taken the requisite (?) steps to carry out the task of the 7th Corps, and its arrival necessitated but small alterations.\* General von Steinmetz, moreover, was much enraged at the contents of the order. He considered this treatment of an army commander as "wanting in consideration," and that if it was proposed to thus pass over the army commander and address orders to the army-corps, an army command would become useless. Of his army there really remained only one corps under his command, since the 1st Corps was withdrawn from his direct sphere of influence, and the 8th Corps was entirely taken from him.

The order  
for the  
operations,  
and  
General  
von  
Steinmetz.

It was not necessary to have two generals in command of the 7th Corps, and he had no army left. What was he there for, then? Steinmetz was one of those generals who consider that they have an inalienable right to any corps which has once been placed under them; as soon as any part of these is taken from them for a shorter or a longer time, they consider themselves injured, and oppose everything. Clausewitz mentions this as an argument against the introduction of any intermediate position between the supreme commander and the corps, and in the case of such generals as Steinmetz he is right. Before his return to Ars, the general had, from the south of Gravelotte, examined the enemy's position at Point du Jour and Moscou, had noticed much action and movement there, and from the skilful fortification of the ground, which he had seen to be in progress at 3 p.m., had concluded that the enemy would neither attack nor fall back, but was rather preparing himself to resist an attack. The masses of the enemy which he had himself observed, especially considering their nearness and concentration, might, so thought the

\* By this is to be understood the pushing forward of two battalions of the 53rd to the north-east border of the Bois de Vaux. See later on.

general, prepare many difficulties for the 7th Corps, which alone he had at his disposal, and which was in a very unfavourable tactical-geographical situation; indeed, the general considered its condition to be actually endangered, after the 8th Corps, which was at Gorze, had been withdrawn from his command by the order which was received at 4 p.m.

Disposi-  
tions of  
General  
von  
Steinmetz  
for the  
morning of  
the 18th  
of August.

General von Steinmetz first informed his army of the order which had been received, and, at 6.30 p.m., specially directed the 8th Corps to be in the following positions by 5 a.m. on the 18th of August, and to hold them to the uttermost:—

1st and 2nd Battalions of the 53rd Regiment and the 7th Jäger Battalion, on the northern edge of the Bois de Vaux.

1st and 2nd Battalions of the 77th Regiment on the border of the Bois des Ognons which is advanced towards Gravelotte.

In rear the Fusilier Battalion of the 53rd Regiment.

The remainder of the 14th Division in the Mance Valley to the south of the Mance mill.

The Corps Artillery and the greater part of the 13th Division in the valley to the west of Ars.

The 26th Brigade, one battery, and one squadron, General von Steinmetz reserved under his special command, posting them part in Ars and part lower down the Moselle.

The outposts were towards Vaux.

Thus the 7th Corps fronted to the north and east, and the enemy was on its right flank, about on a level with the 53rd and the 77th. The greater part of the corps was enclosed in two valleys, separated by large and scarcely passable forests, and the tactical situation was thus certainly not favourable, for a serious and energetic advance of the French might have had for a time most unpleasant consequences for the corps, which was thus divided and scarcely capable of being deployed. The 8th Corps was in and near Gorze, about  $4\frac{1}{2}$  miles as the crow flies to the west of the 14th Division, and separated from the latter by difficult tract of wooded country, while it was, moreover, withdrawn from the general's command. Before any support could come up from this side a disaster might very well have befallen the 7th Corps, since General von Steinmetz had no force beyond that corps, at the very moment when by the position of events he seemed to be thrown upon his own resources. Though the general's uneasiness might perhaps seem to have good grounds, there are situations both in tactics and in strategy which cannot always be dealt with "according to rule," in which something must be dared and endured, and which may well beget a feeling of discomfort. In these cases we must trust a little to luck. The situation in question was of this character. It was bad enough that an army-corps should find itself in such a plight; but, the more troops were so situated, the worse would the look-out be for them. The highly gifted Moltke doubtless felt this, and this may well have been the real reason why he, in this hour of tension, withdrew the 8th Corps from Steinmetz; of this the latter was himself probably conscious. This we may conclude from the fact that his irritation reached its height after 4 p.m. on the 17th of August.



After issuing the orders given above, General von Steinmetz reported accordingly to the head-quarters at Pont à Mousson, and added to the statement the observations (which have been already given), which he had made in the afternoon from the south of Gravelotte. This document arrived at the head-quarters during the night, after Moltke had retired to rest. Here is another proof of the great disadvantage which is brought about by placing head-quarters too far from the field of action. If conditions had been better arranged, all written orders and reports would have been unnecessary, since the head-quarters and the army-commands might very well have communicated directly. In that case, however, they must certainly have all three remained in the neighbourhood of the enemy. Moltke, at 4 a.m. on the 18th of August, answered, among other matters:—

Reports  
from  
General  
von  
Steinmetz  
to Moltke.

"The 7th Corps will at first maintain a defensive attitude. Its connection with the 8th can only be made to the front. Should it then appear that the enemy's army is retiring on Metz, we shall carry out a change of front to the right. The 1st Army will be supported, if necessary, by the 2nd Line of the 2nd Army."

It follows from the above that General von Moltke did not regard the situation as serious. He, who had already, since 2 p.m. on the 17th, six corps concentrated under his hand, while the seventh (the 2nd) was sure to arrive on the 18th, might, indeed, hold the great danger, which Steinmetz dreaded, to be impossible. Since, even if the 7th Corps were overthrown, the force which he had at his disposal would have been amply sufficient to snatch his partial victory from the enemy, wherever he might be found; Moltke's strategical object attained, he could, at the moment when Steinmetz saw danger ahead, no longer fail; and even worse things, such as really arose on the 18th, could scarcely come to pass. Steinmetz, in his communication, seems to have wished the 8th Corps to be recalled and placed more to the east. A truer judgment showed Moltke that "the connection with the 8th Corps must be made to the front." Moreover, it was not the 8th Corps which was to seek for connection with the 7th, but the 7th with the 8th. Steinmetz fell yet more into the rôle of a follower; he felt the force of his mightier leader, and his anger increased accordingly. "To the front," meant at Gravelotte. If the situation of the 7th Corps was considered by General von Steinmetz as being so "dangerous," he had it in his power to improve it by moving as quickly as possible out of the Mance Valley. Steinmetz had done this magnificently in 1866. It must obviously be done, if he was to serve as the pivot for a deployment. But such a pivot could not be found at Ars, nor on the Moselle, nor in the wooded ground; it must lie at a tactical point, that is to say, at Gravelotte and its neighbourhood. The earlier General von Steinmetz reached that point with the main portion of the 7th Corps the better, and so much the earlier would he be able to maintain an effective defensive, which should have been the object in this case, and for which his present position afforded no opportunity,

since the space was insufficient. But, in order to quiet General von Steinmetz, Moltke allowed him to believe in his being supported by the 2nd Line of the 2nd Army.

But General von Steinmetz did not yet lose his misgivings with regard to the valley of the Moselle, and at 7 a.m., on the 18th of August, General von Manteuffel (1st Corps) received an order "to push forward a brigade of infantry and some batteries to Vaux, but beyond the zone of effect of the fortress, in order to be able from the right bank of the Moselle to take in flank any possible attack upon Ars." We may remark, in passing, that this brigade came up into the position which was laid down for it.

Historico-strategical importance of Moltke's answer of 4 a.m. on the 18th of August.

Moltke's answer of 4 a.m. on the 18th of August is so far of historical importance that therein, for the first time, appears the ruling idea of the subsequent battle and of its result, the surrender of the French army and of Metz; others may have thought of this before, but I maintain that Moltke first put it into words. The enemy did not, indeed, fall back into Metz, and this hypothesis was not exactly realized; that he did so retire was the consequence of the battle; but, nevertheless, the enemy was then found in a position which rendered the change of front to the right a necessity. Moreover, the answer is of value as regards the course of the action, since the 7th Corps was not ordered to take up the defensive, but only to maintain a "defensive attitude," and that only "at first." The question of "supporting if necessary" leads to the conclusion that Moltke did not intend that the 7th Corps should remain on the defensive. In short, the maintenance of the defensive had especially to do with the change of front, and was intended to cover a movement rather than to be a part of the fight itself after that movement had been completed; it was of a strategical rather than of a tactical nature.

Gravelotte as a pivot and as a point of attack.

The march of the 2nd Army on the front Rezonville-Ville-sur-Yron, with which the 8th Corps was to conform on the right flank, moreover, increased for General von Steinmetz his feeling of isolation in the country, so unfavourable for the development of an action, which lies by the Moselle and the Mance, and this the more, in his opinion, since in their movement the 2nd Army and the 8th Corps would get further and further from the 7th the later they found the enemy, while he had not been informed in the order of 2 p.m. of the 17th, where the 7th Corps was to "cover the movement at the commencement against any attack from Metz." Two cases might arise: the enemy might break out in the valley of the Moselle, either in front of or towards Gravelotte. In the first case, the German communications would certainly be cut, but the army would not be directly attacked; in the second, on the other hand, the blow would fall direct on the right flank. This, of course, left out of consideration the small probability of the first case, and the certainly equal unlikelihood of the second, since the French had voluntarily abandoned Gravelotte at 3 p.m. on the 17th. For, if the French had had any intention of an attack in force in this direction, they must have retained their hold on Gravelotte. Their voluntary surrender of this

point was the clearest possible indication of their true intention, and the generals, von Moltke and von Steinmetz, had the same opportunity of realizing this then as we have to-day.

From this point of view the situation of the 7th Corps was not then really dangerous, though General von Steinmetz considered it to be so. This was so much the less the case, since the country between Ars and the Mance mill was just as disadvantageous to the French as for us, and equally unsuited to their tactical action as to ours. General von Steinmetz had nothing worse to dread than the temporary loss of Ars, and the consequent forced retirement of the troops there by a roundabout way upon Ancy-sur-Moselle or Novéant; in other words, that the 7th Corps might be cut in two. It could, at any rate, certainly escape! Considering this, General von Steinmetz must naturally have come to the conclusion that Gravelotte and no other place must be the pivot, and that he ought therefore to reach this place, to occupy it, and to hold it as soon as possible with the mass of his Corps; everything else followed as a matter of course, including a sufficient connection with the other parts of the army, since he must have felt certain that the head-quarters would provide for this in the early morning of the 18th.

Tactically speaking, General von Steinmetz, in my opinion, made a mistake, in that, though he considered the situation of the 7th Corps to be dangerous, he did not, as soon as he was certain that Gravelotte had been abandoned (3 p.m.), at once strongly occupy that place on the 17th of August. This must have been done in force, but General von Steinmetz left his troops in the narrow valleys, while if there lay any danger anywhere, it lay in the fact that they were thus hemmed in. What was the use of keeping an army-corps for twenty-four hours in narrow valleys, where it could not deploy? The sooner it got out of these valleys the better for it. But General von Steinmetz then regarded Ars as much more important than Gravelotte, and therein was his mistake. The object of Moltke's beautiful strategical combination was to pass the Moselle, in order to make use of the advantages of the inner line. If the enemy did break out on the right bank of the Moselle, General von Manteuffel (1st Corps) had been directed on the evening of the 17th to fall back on Remilly. General von Moltke had thus carefully borne in mind all dangers which could arise.

At 9 a.m. on the 17th, the 28th Infantry Brigade, which was marching at the head of the 14th Division, and was moving from Ars-sur-Moselle upon Gravelotte, had been fired on in the neighbourhood of the second Mance mill, and General von Steinmetz, who at that moment had come up to the head of that brigade, consequently ordered an attack to be made on the woods which lay in front of them, so that the 1st and 2nd battalions of the 77th, and the 1st and 2nd battalions of the 53rd, had to clear and to occupy the Bois de Vaux. The fusilier battalion of the 53rd followed the 77th as a reserve. These battalions carried out their task; the first two occupied the northern edge of the Bois des Ognons, and the latter two the north-east border of the Bois de Vaux, opposite to the hill

Criticism  
of the dis-  
positions  
and of the  
decisions  
of General  
von  
Steinmetz.

marked 1081. The 1st and 2nd battalions of the 53rd thus covered the right flank of the line of march of the 7th Corps on Gravelotte, whose exit from the Mance Valley was protected towards the front by the 1st and 2nd battalions of the 77th, and the fusilier battalion of the 53rd. This all took place while the French were moving into their position for the 18th of August, and was tactically most undesirable to them, since this state of affairs must have given the French reason to fear that the Germans would fall upon their columns of march during the movement. The Germans had no such intention, and were besides too weak in numbers for the purpose; but the fact is mentioned in order to show that the French had at this point, on the 17th, as good reason as the Germans to avoid a serious encounter.

Even before the French evacuated Gravelotte, General von Steinmetz had himself carefully followed what they did and left undone, and continued his observation after the surrender of that village. The impressions which he thus gained, and which he fully reported, were altogether correct. But if Steinmetz was convinced by noon on the 17th of August that the French did not intend to retreat, but meant to stay where they were and prepare for battle, he ought, especially after the receipt of the order of 2 p.m. on the 17th, not only (as he quite rightly did) to have reported his impressions to the head-quarters, but should also have taken personally the greatest possible trouble to keep himself, by means of his own observation, up to the mark with regard to what was going on, and to make every preparation to attack in the best possible manner (if by any chance this became necessary) that position of the enemy which he had himself reconnoitred and criticized.

The fight of the 53rd on the north-east border of the Bois de Vaux never really ceased after 9 a.m. on the 17th, since the troops of both sides continued to fire on each other up to the beginning of the battle; on the other hand, nothing of importance occurred in the direction of Gravelotte after the evacuation of that village at 3 p.m.

If General von Steinmetz believed at 4 p.m. on the 17th that the French would await an attack, he ought either to have decided himself, or allowed others to decide, how best to advance against the line Rozerieulles—the quarry of the same name, whether the north-east border of the Bois de Vaux was sufficiently strongly occupied for the performance of this duty, and to cover the previous march of the 7th Corps through the Mance Valley, whether any practicable roads (and, if so, which and for what arms) led through the Bois de Vaux, etc.; in short, everything of importance ought to have been reconnoitred and prepared. Owing to circumstances, Steinmetz had become in a high degree the director of events and the guide to action. Steinmetz, at least to a certain extent, had an opportunity of judging from the neighbourhood of Gravelotte as to the condition of affairs in and around Point de Jour, while the map must have already shown him that the south front of the French position was the most important, supposing that the

enemy were to be attacked, and that it therefore demanded special attention. Three wood roads then ran from Ars to the Mance mill in the direction of the height 1081. These roads must have been well studied after the fight of the 53rd in the morning, and one of them ought to have been at once made practicable for artillery; and the most convenient should have been selected. For this, it is obvious, there was ample time, when we compare the few hours which were available for the far more difficult work on the "Steiger," which Napoleon had to carry out on the 13th of October, 1806. Moreover, the road leading to Vaux might have been used; in which case, if it were determined to attack, strong masses of artillery might have been advanced by both roads against the south front of the French position, which might thus have been easily made almost untenable. Unfortunately everything necessary in this respect was left undone, though Steinmetz's own opinions pointed to this necessity, and such foresight and arrangements were simply the logical deductions from his view of the situation.

After the receipt of the order of 2 p.m. General von Steinmetz pushed forward the 7th Jäger Battalion to reinforce the two battalions of the 53rd in the Bois de Vaux; he in other respects made no change of importance in the then conditions of things. It is hard to understand the meaning of this, for if he feared an attack, this reinforcement was insufficient. If Steinmetz had acted in accordance with the opinion which he had formed, he would, immediately after the receipt of the order, have made the following dispositions:—

"1. The whole of the 28th Infantry Brigade will advance to the north-east edge of the Bois de Vaux, and will hold this under all circumstances, in order to cover the valley of the Mance, and to protect the corps artillery which must be used at a later period.

"2. The corps artillery will remain until further orders in Ars-sur-Moselle.

"3. The 27th Infantry Brigade will cover Ars by taking up a position in the direction of Vaux.

"4. The 25th Infantry Brigade will at once relieve the advanced guard of the 28th Brigade (three battalions of the 77th and 53rd) in the direction of Gravelotte, and will take up their duty as regards that village.

"5. The 26th Infantry Brigade will until further orders take up a position near the Mance mill. (In order that they might, as was probable, be used at a later hour from that point against the south front of the French position.)

"6. The artillery of the 13th and 14th Divisions will march at 6 a.m. on the 18th, in rear of the 25th Infantry Brigade, in the direction of Gravelotte. The cavalry of both divisions will follow them in the same direction, detaching one squadron to the infantry of the 14th Division to carry reports.

"All reports to be sent to me at Gravelotte."



If such dispositions had been made (which under the circumstances should obviously have been done), the 7th Corps, if an advance were ordered on the 18th against the enemy's position, would have been in a condition to act energetically. The carrying of orders, and the conveyance of information and of reports, would have been suitably arranged for, while the requisite masses would have been close at hand, and might have played their part as occasion served.

Arrival of  
General  
von  
Steinmetz  
at Gravelotte.

The night between the 17th and the 18th of August passed quietly along the front of the 1st Army; this was reported to the head-quarters, when they arrived at Flavigny at 6 a.m. on the 18th. It was equally quiet along the remainder of the front. General von Steinmetz rode forward at 8 a.m. to the plateau to the south-west of Gravelotte, after having received from Colonel von Unger a report that the enemy's position from Point du Jour to Leipzig was unchanged. Considering the situation, General von Steinmetz arrived somewhat lamentably late! At 5 a.m. on the 18th, after Gravelotte had been occupied by the 1st Battalion of the 77th Regiment, the 14th Division had been posted to the north of the Bois des Ognons, but "concealed from the view of the enemy," and the 26th Brigade remained in Ars, while the rest of the 7th Corps was advancing towards the plateau of Gravelotte. While standing to the south-west of Gravelotte, General von Steinmetz received a report which had been despatched by General von Goeben at 8 a.m. from the neighbourhood of Rezonville, to the following effect:—

"The 8th Corps advanced on Rezonville at 6 a.m.; its advanced guard is at Villers aux Bois, in communication with the 9th Corps, which is marching upon St. Marcel. Under these circumstances, the 8th Corps will take up a position at Rezonville, in order to be able to move either to the right or the left."

This shows that General von Goeben had fully conformed to the order of 2 p.m. on the 17th. If it was necessary to form front to the left, he was ready to do so, while if it was determined to push on towards the north, he could follow in that direction. It was quite right that General von Goeben, in spite of his being withdrawn from the 1st Army command, should send this report, and this should always be done in similar cases.

Arrival of  
Prince  
Frederic  
Charles at  
Mars la  
Tour.  
Advance of  
the 2nd  
Army.

Let us now turn our attention to the 2nd Army. Prince Frederic Charles was already in the saddle at Mars la Tour at 5.30 a.m. He was under the impression that the enemy had retired on Conflans, and therefore set his army in motion towards the north. His measures were directed solely by this view of the case, otherwise the massing of the 2nd Army in echelons would have permitted a change of front at the moment when such a movement might become necessary, in which event the Guard Corps would not have lost three hours by crossing the line of march of the 12th Corps, owing to which the 2nd Army was fatally unable to move during those hours. On this point Moltke offers the following keen criticism:—

"After the commander of the 2nd Army had ordered that the 12th Corps, although standing on the right, should move on the outermost left flank, very considerable delay was caused by the crossing of the two lines of march. The passage of the Saxons through Mars la Tour was not over until 9 a.m., and the Guard Corps could not follow until that hour."

By taking up this direction of march (on Conflans), it might have become necessary, even if the retreat of the French had been carried out correctly, to make a change of front to the left. Herein lies the great strategical difficulty of this day, with all its evil consequences, namely, the difference between the views of the head-quarters and those of the 2nd Army. The 2nd Army, owing to the neighbourhood of Conflans (five miles to the north of Mars la Tour), must have the better information, and a retreat of the French on Conflans should, under these conditions, have been possible only if reconnaissance was entirely neglected by that army. Unfortunately this was exactly the case. On the other hand, at the head-quarters, a retreat on Conflans had been considered to be no longer possible—at any rate, one by Auboué and Briey. A certain discord of ideas between the head-quarters and this army-command was also apparent here; this was not so great as that with the commander of the other army, and found its remedy in the massing of the 2nd Army. It was necessary, and would have been possible, to lay before the head-quarters, when they reached Flavigny at 6 a.m., a clear view of the situation—indeed, this was the main task of the 2nd Army—but unfortunately this task was not fulfilled. The commander of the 2nd Army reported the details of this march to the head-quarters from Vionville, and also that temporary halts had been made at Caulre Farm, Doncourt, and Jarny. This action, indeed, was so far in accordance with the order of 2 p.m. of the 17th of August.

At 8 a.m. the head-quarters had adopted the view that the main force of the enemy had fallen back upon Metz, and extended to the north as far as Amanvillers. Consequently a message was sent to the 2nd Army by Lieut.-Colonel von Verdy, "not to extend its left so wide," as had been reported. The head-quarters were, moreover, waiting for some confirmation of their view. At this moment the head-quarters were at Flavigny, the leader of the 2nd Army at Vionville, and that of the 1st on the road to Gravelotte. All three, as far as events could then be judged, were not at the places where they should have been. The head-quarters should have been on the road to the height 1038 near Verneville, the leader of the 2nd Army by Caulre Farm, and that of the 1st Army at Gravelotte; all the roads would then have been shorter, and all reports and messages would have arrived quicker at their goal. If Prince Frederic Charles had now kept the leading corps on the road to Etain, they would actually, while turning their right flank to the enemy, have marched past the French at but a short distance from them, and it would seem that they could not see the wood for trees, as indeed had been the case during the last twenty-four hours. How would a

The first idea of the head-quarters.

Napoleon at this moment, between 8 and 9 a.m., have personally obtained information. He would have done nothing of the kind, for he would have obtained it long before.

At 9 a.m. the 8th Corps, which was on the march towards Villers aux Bois, had halted, the 7th Corps was assembling to the south of Gravelotte, the 9th stood by Caulre Farm, the 12th was deploying at Jarny, the Guard, owing to the mischievous and unnecessary crossing of the line of march of the 12th, was just leaving Mars la Tour; the 3rd was at Vionville, the 10th was ready to start from Tronville, the 2nd was moving on Onville, while the 5th and 6th Cavalry Divisions stood fast at Tronville and Vionville, and the Saxon was on the road to the west of Jarny. In this entirely satisfactory position the 8th Corps was still withdrawn from the command of General von Steinmetz, while the head-quarters had also reserved to themselves the disposition of the 3rd Corps, which was thus likewise no longer under Prince Frederic Charles. General von Moltke at this time intended the latter corps to serve as that support to the 1st Army, of which he had spoken to General von Steinmetz in his letter of 4 a.m.; when, at 11 a.m., the 2nd Corps drew near to Buxières, the 3rd Corps was returned to the 2nd Army, and the 2nd Corps told off to support the 1st Army. But the 8th Corps was not given back.

The second  
idea of the  
head-  
quarters.

Even at 9.30 a.m. the situation was not realized at Flavigny; even then it was thought that "the enemy is moving towards Briey." It appeared to be now impossible to make certain as to this point. Information to the above effect was sent to the 2nd Army at 9.30 a.m. This, indeed, did not agree with the first idea, but might have served as a hint to the mounted troops of the 2nd Army to at last find out the proper direction by drawing the enemy's fire. But on these two days the very simplest things seem to have been neglected in a manner which is to-day quite incomprehensible.

Will it be believed that the right flank of the enemy was less than five miles from Caulre Farm, and had been there for nearly twenty-four hours, and that, though more than four cavalry divisions were available, this had not been discovered, in spite of the fact that a camp had been seen which extended from Montigny to Rozerieulles, and had been observed—though perhaps at times not very distinctly—to be in motion?

The third  
idea of the  
head-  
quarters.

The order  
for the  
battle.

About 10 a.m. General von Sperling (the Chief of the Staff of the 1st Army) and Major von Holleben reported that "the enemy in considerable force appears determined to accept battle, and extends from the Bois des Génivaux." This was no news, and could add nothing fresh to the strategical idea, since it was all well known before. Nevertheless, in consequence of this report, the real order for the battle was issued from Flavigny at 10.30 a.m. This order is so important with reference to our criticism of the occurrences in the Mance Ravine that it must be given word for word:—

"From reports which have been received it is believed that the enemy will hold his ground between Point du Jour and Montigny la Grange. Four French battalions are in possession of the Bois des Génivaux. His

Majesty is of opinion that it will be advisable to move the 12th and the Guard Corps in the direction of Batilly, in order, if the enemy is retiring upon Briey, to come up with him at Ste. Marieaux Chênes, or, if he remains in position on the heights, to attack him from Amanvillers inwards. The attack must take place simultaneously, by the 1st Army from the Bois de Vaux and Gravelotte, by the 9th Corps against the Bois des Génivaux and Verneville, and by the left wing of the 2nd Army from the north.

"(Signed) v. MOLTKE."

This order also did not answer to the situation; its execution might have easily been made to correspond with the instructions given one hour earlier to Prince Frederic Charles. If that had been done—and it might have been without any difficulty—the attack "from the north" might have been carried out even if the enemy extended beyond Montigny la Grange in that direction. From this point of view it must be acknowledged that the order came too late. But that at 10.30 a.m. it was still not known whether the enemy was marching away or was standing to fight, is one of those extraordinary things which happen in war! At 11 a.m. General von Sperling rode back from Flavigny to Gravelotte,  $3\frac{1}{4}$  miles, in order to give special instructions to General von Steinmetz "not to attack with the 2nd Army until the 1st Army had advanced farther, and was in readiness to co-operate." Taking into consideration the situation on either side, this might well have led to a delay of three hours. It would then have been more than 1.30 p.m.

Before this order of 10.30 a.m. had reached the 2nd Army, its commander had, at 10 a.m., directed the 9th Corps "to advance in the direction of Verneville and La Folie," so that with respect to the position of the axis of the battle there was harmony between the dispositions of the head-quarters and the execution of the leader of the 2nd Army. "In case the right wing of the enemy is in this neighbourhood, it is to be attacked by the 9th Corps."

The order  
for the  
attack of  
the 9th  
Corps.

The dispositions which related to the other corps of the 2nd Army may be omitted.

This was a momentous order! At 10 a.m. Moltke had not yet issued an order for the battle; this did not take place until 10.30. Yet Prince Frederic Charles must not on this account be blamed; on the contrary, their passage towards the French right wing was a path full of difficulties for the 9th Corps.

Neither army had during twenty-four hours succeeded in finding this right wing, yet to find it may to a certain degree be considered to have been both easy and natural. Since General von Manstein pushed forward in this direction, he could not, owing to the nearness of the enemy, avoid coming shortly into contact with him, in which case it was 100 to 1 that the 9th Corps, thus sent to the front, would attack alone, with the result that the two armies could not be in a position to "attack simultaneously." The "simultaneously" presupposes that the situation on the side of the French was absolutely fixed, and that everything on our side would be carried out with mathematical accuracy before the attack was made; this supposition included the occupation of the correct front and of a sufficient length

of it. Both of these failed, and the two armies could not therefore "attack simultaneously;" they had to do so gradually, and the 2nd Army, owing to its then dislocation, attacked really by successive fractions. How could any one hope to begin an attack simultaneously with such masses, when no one was very clear as to what "simultaneously" meant? The second must in such a case follow the footsteps of the first! The report from the 2nd Army on the above point reached the head-quarters after the order of 10.30 a.m. had been sent off and was on its way; this order reached the leader of the 2nd Army at 11 a.m. After Prince Frederic Charles had despatched his order of 10 a.m., and had received that of the head-quarters of 10.30 a.m., many reports (at 11 a.m.) confirmed the opinion on which he had framed his measures of 10 a.m., namely, "that no retreat was taking place, but that the enemy was standing to fight;" but at 11 a.m. no one yet knew for certain where his right flank was. The Official Account speaks of this as follows: "Farther to the north the character of the ground and the close country limited the view." This cannot well have been the case.

The post of  
the French  
right flank  
fixed.

It was about 11 a.m. when the report of Lieutenant Scholl reached the leader of the 2nd Army; this said that a French camp lay at St. Privat. The order of 10.30 of the head-quarters arrived at the 2nd Army at about the same time. Prince Frederic Charles had now himself ascertained the bounds of the enemy's position, and the danger of his order of 10 a.m. became clear to his mind; he therefore, at 11.30, issued another order to recall the 9th Corps from the attack; it was too late. The Corps had begun the battle before the new order had been despatched.

At about the same time as Lieutenant Scholl saw from Batilly a camp of the enemy at St. Privat, General von Manstein himself had, from Verneville, observed one at Montigny la Grange. From Batilly to St. Privat is about  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles, as the crow flies, and from Verneville to Montigny la Grange about  $2\frac{1}{2}$ . Both points from which the enemy was observed were on the road from Gravelotte to Auboué, and in the above-mentioned direction of march of the 2nd Army; moreover, these places were such that, if they had been pointed out to patrols as positions which ought to be reached, they would, in clear weather, have given as wide a view as it was possible to obtain to the north, east, and west. Thus, in order to make and to report the observations of General von Manstein and Lieutenant Scholl, some ordinary scouts would have been sufficient. It would not even have been necessary to use officers' patrols. Again, unless it had been forbidden to send out patrols, all that was observed by these two officers at 11 a.m. on the 18th, might have been discovered at 6 p.m. on the 17th. Therefore, after the order of 2 p.m. on the 17th of August had reached the leaders of the 2nd Army, and it was seen that its execution must be carried out close to the points Batilly and Verneville, the first task of that army, before they began to carry it out, was to determine whether the direction in which they were ordered to move was free of the enemy or not. This ought to have been done in the afternoon of the 17th. For this purpose nothing



was required but ordinary patrols in that direction, and these would most probably have been able to observe all that was worth knowing without having been seen themselves; for Lieutenant Scholl and General von Manstein were not fired on, while the situation was exactly the same at 11 a.m. on the 18th as on the afternoon of the 17th. The French had neglected the very simplest precautions in the way of outposts; towards the west they did not even show any patrols, and might thus have been watched without knowing it. After the arrival of the order of 2 p.m. on the 17th, there can have been no doubt in the 2nd Army as to the direction in which a reconnaissance should be carried out.

General von Manstein at this time recognized from Verneville that the enemy's right flank did not lie in his front, but extended farther towards St. Privat—a fact which, moreover, proves that from Verneville alone full information might have been obtained on the 17th. But the carelessness of the French seemed to him to be tactically so tempting that he nevertheless determined to act contrary to the spirit of the order, and to surprise the enemy in his camps by suddenly opening a fire of artillery. This succeeded perfectly. It is no part of my task to decide whether General von Manstein in acting thus did rightly and suitably to the circumstances; it is only necessary to mention that the Official Account is wrong, when it says that the character of the country, etc., limited the view to the north; and, further, to state that, if any one had ridden forward in the direction laid down by the head-quarters for the forward movement of the 18th, he would have learnt the position of the enemy's camps, and would thus without more ado have solved all problems. No one did so ride until the morning of the 18th of August; why, nobody knows.\*

At 11.30 a.m. the head-quarters were still at Flavigny, the leader of the 1st Army south-west of Gravelotte, and that of the 2nd at Vionville, near the 3rd Corps. Prince Frederic Charles now began to move his forces to the north; Rezonville was laid down as the point on which the 2nd Corps was to march, the 3rd on Verneville, and the 10th on St. Ail.

When the roar of the guns of the 9th Corps was heard at Flavigny, the following order was sent to General von Steinmetz, in order that the 1st Army might not attack prematurely:—

"The isolated action which can be now heard going on in front of Verneville does not call for a general attack by the 1st Army. There is no necessity on this account to show large masses of troops, and if you must act, it should be only by using the artillery as a prelude to the later attack."

It was now noon.

It is here necessary to picture to ourselves the principal features

*Précis of  
the orders*

\* Moltke's statement contradicts that in the Official Account, for he says, "The large masses which stood on his left at St. Privat he (General von Manstein) could not see from his position. He thought that the enemy's right flank was in front of him, and resolved to act in accordance with the first order sent to him, and to surprise the enemy by his attack."

from head-  
quarters.

and the main principles of the method of procedure from 2 p.m. on the 17th to noon on the 18th. The various changes in the scheme of the head-quarters (at 2 p.m. on the 17th of August, at 4 a.m., 8 a.m., 9.30 a.m., 10.30 a.m., and noon of the 18th), and of that of the commander of the 2nd Army (at 5.30 a.m., 9 a.m., 10 a.m., and 11.30 a.m. of the 18th), and of that of the 1st Army (at 6 a.m., on the report of Colonel von Unger, on that of Colonel von Loe at 9 a.m., and of General von Steinmetz's idea, about 10 a.m., that the enemy was falling back, while Major von Holleben and General von Sperling believed that he was still in position), are each and all to be attributed to faulty reconnaissance on the part of the 1st Army, and to the absence of all reconnaissance on that of the head-quarters and of the 2nd Army.

The conse-  
quences  
of the  
neglect to  
recon-  
noître.

Since no movements of the enemy were known with the exception of such as had been observed during the morning of the 17th, and it was thus uncertain whether he was falling back on Metz, in order to receive battle while resting on the fortress, or whether he had retired by Conflans or Briey (for a retreat through the valley of the Moselle was not considered), it should have been a matter of course to decide by reconnaissances which of these two plans had been adopted, or whether both of them might not be intended by the enemy, inasmuch as Marshal Bazaine might have left part of his army at Metz, and have marched away with the remainder. If, then, an operation was designed which should take account of all these alternatives (witness the order of 2 p.m. on the 17th of August), the preliminary condition was a reconnaissance to the front and to the flanks. On the left the matter was simple, for there everything would have revealed itself; on the front and right it was more complex, and here the contents of that order, on account of the latitude allowed, called imperatively for reconnaissance. If one side falls back in consequence of a tactical operation, it is laid down in every text-book that the other should follow it with a chain of scouts at a distance within the limit of vision, in order not to lose sight of it. Nothing of this sort took place throughout the extent of the 2nd Army, which thus along the whole front lost touch and sight of the enemy, and knew nothing whatever of what he was doing. At 11 a.m. Rezonville was abandoned by the French, at 3 p.m. they left Gravelotte, and between these hours they evacuated Verneville. With the exception of Gravelotte, either this was known, or it ought to have been known, at 2 p.m. by the head-quarters and by the commander of the 2nd Army. At 3 p.m. on the 17th the 1st Army certainly knew already that the enemy was diligently strengthening the position in front of Gravelotte. If, then, the head-quarters had been on the field of the operations, the report of this circumstance would have reached them at the latest at 4 p.m., and the news would have arrived at the commander of the 2nd Army by 5 p.m. at the latest.

The order of 2 p.m. on the 17th, taken in connection with the knowledge which was then possessed of the abandonment of Rezonville and Verneville, imposed upon the commander of the 2nd Army the duty of making certain where the enemy had halted, and what

he intended to do. Nothing was done on the 17th to carry out this duty. If it was then accepted that the enemy would remain in position near Metz, it was obviously necessary to form an idea where the enemy could so stand. For this purpose were available only the two important rows of heights which run from south to north, and are separated by the Mance Valley; these begin at Point du Jour and Plappeville, and join somewhere about St. Privat. If it was considered that the enemy was retiring on Verdun or Châlons, this might have been made clear by occupying the course of the Orne from Conflans to Auboué. These were the two most important points, as might have been seen by simply looking at the map. If this was examined with reference to the two possibilities, no other conclusion would have been possible but that Auboué was the point where both the possibilities could be suitably and simultaneously met. For this reason the proper decision was evident, namely, to send to that place as soon as possible observers who were capable of appreciating the tactical situation. From Vionville to Auboué is about eight miles. If scouts had been sent off after the issue of the order of 2 p.m. on the 17th, allowing half an hour for observations and for halts, they might have been back at Vionville at 6 p.m. on the 17th at the latest, and might thus have obtained information to govern the particular events of the coming day; this information might have reached the head-quarters at Pont à Mousson by 9 p.m. This is what ought to have been done, to judge by the map, and there was no excuse for not doing it.

If troops undertake anything, whether in war or in peace, the front and flanks of their march must be made secure. If the 2nd Army was to advance on the 18th between Rezonville and Ville-sur-Yron, their march—considering the known nearness ( $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles) of the enemy to their right, which was in massed echelons from the left—should have been carried out on these simple principles. They must have asked themselves the question what the strong masses meant which stretched from Point du Jour to Leipzig. It was too strong for a rear-guard—did they think it was two army-corps? If they considered how the line of heights of the enemy's position stretched to the north, they must by the map have recognized that this position was naturally strong—a fact which must have led them to the conclusion that the French probably extended further towards the north. In this case, they ought to have said to themselves that important communications must lie to the east of this position, and that information must be obtained as to what was advancing along them. Even if we pass over these higher but most natural ideas, the simple employment of a mechanical plan required that if any army was to advance in mass between Rezonville and Ville-sur-Yron, its arrangements for reconnaissance, supposing it merely to desire to make itself safe against a disastrous surprise, ought to cover its front and both flanks in that direction which it proposed to take as the guiding line of the movement. No other opinion could be possible. If this distance be taken as the radius of a circle, or if we only judge it by the eye, it is evident that, after

riding over one-third of this radius, the scouts which moved towards the east would have come in contact with the enemy along their entire front. Fire would have been received along the whole of this front, and they might then have been certain, without further evidence, that the enemy was not retiring, but was holding his ground, and preparing for the fight.

Between 5 and 6 a.m. on the 18th, Prince Frederic Charles had sent his orders to Mars la Tour and Vionville; by 6 a.m. the Prince was at Vionville, while at the same hour the head-quarters were at Flavigny, about 1100 yards distant. How easy would it have been to come to an understanding! Since the left echelon of the 2nd Army was to begin its march at 6 a.m., all arrangements for reconnaissance ought to have been in action since 5 a.m. to the north, east, and west; in that case everything of importance would have been reported soon after the start to the head-quarters, and to both army commanders. No cavalry division would have been necessary for this, but merely twenty scouts, who would have been amply sufficient, if they had been pushed forward on the roads to the east on the front from La Folie to Auboué; it would have sufficed if an officer (if possible of the General Staff), accompanied by two orderlies to carry reports, had been sent forward on each of the obvious lines—La Folie, Montigny la Grange to Amanvillers, St. Privat, and Auboué to Roncourt. I have said nothing as to the points to the north or to the west. If we imagine Napoleon I. in this situation, we can see that he alone, with his untiring activity and unceasing movement, would have carried everything out; for the general circumstances made a reconnaissance the simplest thing imaginable.

The enemy must either have retired or have remained in position.

From the morning of the 17th to 9.30 a.m. on the 18th the head-quarters and both army commanders counted upon the retirement of the enemy. What would have been his object in so retiring? To get away as quickly as possible from the Germans! The Germans knew from the morning of the 17th that the enemy were in movement. From Gravelotte to Auboué is  $7\frac{1}{2}$ , and to Conflans about  $9\frac{1}{4}$  miles. If the enemy had really been on the march since the morning of the 17th, it was evident that, granting them only moderate marching powers, they would by 9.30 a.m. on the 18th have crossed the Orne. The considerations being as simple as this, how was it possible to believe at 9.30 a.m. that the enemy was then retiring from the position Point du Jour-Leipzig, where Colonel von Loe had before 9 a.m. reported him to be in the strength of one and a half to two army-corps. Indeed, if this had been the belief ever since the morning of the 17th, then the mistake of not having observed the enemy was doubly disgraceful. The question of the French retreat must, under such considerations, have appeared on the morning of the 18th to be quite improbable; at that time the enemy must either have marched away or be still present. The Germans were uncertain about the former; on the other hand, there was the strongest proof of the latter along the front from Point du Jour to Leipzig. If, however, there was uncertainty at the head-quarters with regard to both points up to 9.30 a.m., why had they not at once, on their arrival at

Flavigny at 6 a.m., ordered the small intervening distance to be reconnoitred. This does not seem to have been done, though one would have thought it almost impossible to have omitted it. As it was, the flank march of the 2nd Army, with its massed corps, which even crossed each other (12th Corps and the Guard), with the cavalry divisions in rear, and with the enemy during the whole extent of the flank march at the most  $4\frac{1}{2}$  miles (which, considering such conditions and masses, is a mere cat's leap), to the east of it, is among the most wonderful in the whole of the history of war. And this took place in very fine weather, with dry roads, and in country which afforded every facility for seeing. Only think what would have happened if the enemy's army had burst forward upon the unmanageable crowds of men when, about 8 a.m., the collision of the 12th and the Guard Corps was at its height! It is true that the 2nd Army paid more attention to the north than to the east; but, considering the line of march, it was necessary to reconnoitre as carefully to the latter as to the former, and the first officer, Lieutenant Scholl, who rode forward to the north-east beyond the area occupied by the troops (12th Corps), discovered at once without any difficulty the enemy's position at St. Privat. All that it was necessary to do was to ride to the front.

The narrative of all these occurrences, which is given in the Official Account, takes refuge in such cunningly worded expressions, duly offered to the reader, as are perhaps unequalled in the history of war. Whoever drew this up has much to answer for to history. When country which lends itself to observation is described as just the contrary; when the crossing of the Guard with the 12th Corps (by which the former lost quite three hours) is explained and cleared up by special and peculiar orders to the Guard Corps; when the withdrawal of the 5th and 6th Cavalry Divisions on to the high plateau of Vionville, with the dearth of water which resulted, is glossed over; when not a word is said as to the omissions in reconnaissance and in the guidance of the army; and when all these matters have been quietly and smoothly mixed up with each other, it absolutely seems as if a prize had been given to that writer of the time who displayed the greatest skill in making black white, and who could do it in such a manner that the unsuspecting reader really sees white where all was, and ever will be, black. But he who presents such things to ordinary common sense must not be surprised if this common sense revolts against them.

Almost twenty-four hours after the issue of the order for the operations appeared the order of 10.30 a.m. on the 18th, which related to a situation which had existed for twenty-four hours, but which was still unrecognized. It had apparently, as regards the enemy, in no way changed; yet in the order it was only "believed" that they would "hold their ground" between Point du Jour and Montigny la Grange. Why "believed"? Considerations with regard to the great age of the royal leader explain why the order for the operations was issued before the situation was clear; circumstances were all-powerful in this case, and it can at least be defended. Up to 10.30 a.m. on the

Criticism  
of the  
order for  
the battle.



18th, if nothing had prevented it, would have been ample time to learn everything, always supposing that scouts had been sent out to observe. Exactly an hour earlier it had been noticed that "troops which were visible on the heights towards Metz were moving in the direction of Briey." Was it that the French had really hindered us so much from seeing and learning the facts? Not by any means. But we persisted in looking through the peep-hole of Gravelotte! At 10.30 a.m. the retreat of the enemy on Briey was counted on, in which case he might be reached by Ste. Marie aux Chênes; this, we may note, was then possible, since that place lies far away from Point du Jour and Jarny. Although, considered as a whole, the order for the attack of 10.30 a.m. affords a proof of the uncertainty which still reigned at the head-quarters with regard to the position and the intentions of the enemy, it was yet totally different in character to the order for the operations. In the latter the main consideration is for the north, the possible secondary direction to the east; in the former the main point is the east, but not without some consideration for the north. It is only wonderful that both these orders were governed by exactly the same amount of knowledge or ignorance. This is the main fault, which cannot be excused from blame, since the two possibilities—a retreat to the north or a standing fast to the east—are considered in both orders. Under the before-mentioned and very favourable circumstances, and though possessing a gigantic staff and apparatus for reconnaissance, nothing whatever of importance had been learnt in twenty-four hours with regard to an enemy who was a mere cat's leap distant. Nevertheless, the order for battle showed the above radical change.

Simul-  
taneousness  
of the  
attack.

Something has already been said with regard to the simultaneousness of the attack by the two armies. It is only possible to make a simultaneous attack on a position when that position has been exactly determined, and when the assailant is at the same distance from it along its whole front. If either of these conditions is not fulfilled, simultaneousness is impossible; in this case they were not fulfilled, and the head-quarters knew that they were not so. It was known by the reports of the 2nd Army that at 10.30 a.m. it stood somewhat as follows: namely, from Caulre Farm to Jarny, with the Guard Corps still considerably in rear of this line, and that it was not ready to change front in due order towards any front in such a manner as would permit *an army* to carry out a simultaneous attack on the above front. Nothing more need be said as to its simultaneous action with the 1st Army. We learn, moreover, without a doubt, from the wording of the order, that at 10.30 a.m. nothing was known of the enemy's position. Consequently the order for the simultaneous attack ought not to have been given; that it was given proves that there was a want of clear knowledge of all the circumstances which have been mentioned. Moreover, in the then situation (and assuming that all worked out in the ordinary way), if the head-quarters had been acquainted with the enemy's position at 10.30 a.m., a simultaneous attack, which should include the turning of the enemy's right flank, could not have taken place before 4 p.m. Again, tactically

speaking, it is impossible to see what advantages were expected from the simultaneous attack. Positions which, as was believed at 10.30 a.m., are  $4\frac{1}{2}$  miles in length, cannot be attacked simultaneously along their whole front. This is mere theory. In such cases, Napoleon used, as the first act, to engage with advanced troops along the entire front, in order to place himself in a position to find out more exactly the distribution of the enemy's forces, as may be done by personal and other reconnaissances; when the enemy had betrayed his dispositions, then, and not till then, the true attack followed from the deployment which had been completed in anticipation. This is the only way in which fortified positions can be treated, such as were in question at the battle of Gravelotte. Nothing of the kind took place on this occasion. So much space has been devoted to these matters, because Gravelotte, within certain limits, must be the typical battle of the future, if the defender wishes to avail himself of the advantages which are founded on the weapons of the present day. A second Gravelotte, given such insufficient reconnaissance, will certainly not be a victory!

Especial importance must be attributed to the fact that the attack of the 1st Army was to take place from Gravelotte and from the Bois de Vaux; in relation to the enemy's position, such as Moltke pictured it to himself, this is "turning both the enemy's flanks."

At 12 o'clock, when the roar of the guns of the 9th Corps resounded over Flavigny from Verneville, Moltke seems to have recognized that the simultaneous attack had been nipped in the bud; he therefore sent to General Steinmetz the order which has been mentioned. But the latter, in the roar of the guns, could pay attention to nothing but the signs of the attack, and, since it is  $3\frac{3}{4}$  miles from Flavigny to Gravelotte, Steinmetz must have heard the sound of the guns long before Moltke's new order can have reached him. This was indeed the case. Nevertheless, there was no harm in Steinmetz having already commenced the artillery fight, but the course of events teaches us that the intention to attack simultaneously failed entirely, since, as a matter of fact, the 2nd Army attacked by corps in succession, just as it had marched, and the 1st by successive echelons, in only one, however, of the two directions prescribed, almost taking the bull by the horns; while, in spite of the enormous machinery at the disposal of the head-quarters, and of the army commands, there was no unity of action in the direction of the battle, which was from the beginning tactically abortive.

Yet Moltke held to the idea of a simultaneous attack with his peculiar tenacity. In order even yet to bring it about, the following information was sent from the head-quarters to Prince Frederic Charles at 1.45 p.m., "In front of the Bois Doseuillons the 9th Corps is engaged in an artillery combat. The true general attack along the whole line will not take place until considerable forces can be pushed forward against Amanvillers." Thus at 1.45 p.m. the grand head-quarters did not yet know that the enemy's right flank extended to the north of St. Privat. Naturally, therefore, the message which was sent could not lead to any simultaneous attack. The head-quarters first heard of the real extent of this flank after 5 p.m.

The 1st Army is to attack in front and on the flank.

Prince  
Frederic  
Charles's  
direction of  
the battle.

The roar of the guns from Verneville, which was occupied by the 18th Division at 10 a.m., woke the highest authorities to life. Prince Frederic Charles, with the accurate instinct of a general, immediately continued his march; at 1 p.m. he was between St. Marcel and Verneville; at 2 p.m. at Habonville, and up to the end of the battle he remained near the focus of decisive action. In this respect the prince's behaviour was a pattern, it was Napoleonic; indeed, only through it and through the genius of the then Crown Prince of Saxony (12th Corps) could the distances and times be shortened, and the original error be to a satisfactory extent repaired. Both of the Princes immediately grasped the strategical situation fully, in that they both strove to reach, and succeeded in reaching in time, the last line of retreat, the valley of the Moselle. Even that incomparable leader in battle, Napoleon, made mistakes. The true mark of a general is the manner in which he makes good a situation which at the beginning has gone wrong. If Prince Frederic Charles must be blamed for too much caution and delay before the battle, justice compels us to emphasize the fact that the prince, from the moment of the receipt of the report of Lieutenant Scholl, showed himself throughout to be equal to the general situation in its widest strategical sense, and that his direction of the battle from that moment need shun no criticism, being fully equal to that of Napoleon; this careful general did not quit the point where the decision took place until the blazing flames of St. Privat had been extinguished. Indeed, if any individual persons can be described as the victors of St. Privat, they are the Prince Frederic Charles and the Crown Prince Albert of Saxony.

The direc-  
tion of  
the battle  
by the  
head-  
quarters.

The head-quarters and the commander of the 1st Army did not behave as did Prince Frederic Charles. The former at 2 p.m. were somewhere about Rezonville. Since the order for the battle directed that both the enemy's flanks were to be turned, the head-quarters ought to have placed themselves either in rear of the centre, at the height 1038, or in rear of the strategical flank, for example, at St. Privat. Instead of this, they, about 5 p.m., took up a position to the south of Malmaison. The choice of this point may be defended up to the completion of the deployment of the second line; but, after the position of the right flank of the enemy had been determined, and the strategical idea, to throw the foe back into Metz, had become the fixed object of the battle, and when the second line had deployed according to rule, that is to say, at 4 p.m. at the latest, the head-quarters should have moved to some point to the northward; at any rate, they should not have stayed where they did. This is mentioned only with reference to the question of the day concerning all orders and reports.

The direc-  
tion of the  
battle by  
General  
von  
Steinmetz.

The commander of the 1st Army went about noon to the east of Gravelotte, and there remained. This was the best position for him, but what General von Steinmetz did and left undone at that point differed widely from the behaviour of Prince Frederic Charles under certainly not less difficult circumstances. There was no sign of a general in his behaviour. There was no question with the 1st Army

of an attack, such as should have been decided on considering the enemy's position, and the sense of the order for battle of 10.30 a.m.; that army found no means of preparing the success of a frontal attack, nor of supporting that attack from the Bois de Vaux; it did not attack from the Bois de Vaux, though it would have been easier to do so from there than from Gravelotte; it never understood at all Moltke's order of 10.30 a.m.; it apparently knew nothing as to what a common frontal and flank attack depended on—that is to say, upon the previous capture of a strong enveloping infantry fire-position on the east slope of the Mance—it did not suitably carry out the order which it had received; it was never used as a whole, nor had it ever a reasonable object, but the troops poured out their blood under wretched dispositions and by companies and battalions. Every effort which was made at this point to take the position was a failure, and a confused wild jumble, hustle and rush, without any clear idea of what lay before their eyes, or of what, though not so plainly, could be made out from the map.

## PART II.

## V.

## THE GROUND IN THE MANCE RAVINE.

Character  
of the  
rows of  
heights.

BETWEEN the main roads Vionville-Gravelotte-Metz and Ste. Marie-St. Privat-Saulny-Metz lie, approximately north and south, three rows of hills, of which the two westerly run nearly parallel to each other, while the third, that most to the east, bends off a little in a south-easterly direction. The heights are:—

1. That from Gravelotte by Malmaison and Verneville to Ste. Marie aux Chênes.

2. That from Point du Jour by Moscou and Amanvillers to St. Privat.

3. From Plappeville to the quarries of Amanvillers and beyond.

Between these three rows of hills are two deeply cut valleys, that of Châtel between 2 and 3, and that of the Mance between 1 and 2; they are both of a similar character and of a moderate width (250 to 450 yards) at the bottom, with steep sides, which were then covered with thick underwood. The brooks which run through both valleys were, on the 18th of August, 1870, entirely dry, as were also the valleys, which were everywhere passable.

Of the three rows of hills the eastern is throughout the highest, the western throughout the lowest, while the third is between the other two. The distance between the three rows of hills is nearly the same, namely, about 3300 yards, or in places as much as 3850 yards. The space between the two western heights was on the 18th of August, 1870, from Verneville to the south, covered throughout with large and irregularly shaped woods, while so much as lay to the north of Verneville could, generally speaking, be considered as comparatively open and clear for vision. If, under these circumstances, we imagine the enemy as standing somewhat on the line from Montigny la Grange to the south of Point du Jour (and this is what the Germans thought up to 10.30 a.m. on the 18th of August), everything pointed to the desirability of examining Montigny la Grange from the north and north-east, that is to say, this place gave the obvious direction for reconnaissance. The height, 1038'6, to the south-west of Verneville, was not only the most important in the western row of hills, but was also exactly in the centre of the line of the battle, as it later developed, and was thus exceptionally suitable as a position for the grand head-quarters; moreover, it could be reached without danger.



The previously mentioned patches of forest, the Bois des Génivaux to the north and the Bois de Vaux to the south of the road Gravelotte-Metz, were connected by a strip of wood, through which that main road ran. This strip began nearly at the spot where the brook which ran from La Folie fell into the Mance, and extended as far as the Gravel-pit hill, with an extreme width of 550 yards. The strip of wood did not hinder the view from hill to hill, since it then began about halfway down the western slope and ended at about one-third up the eastern, so that both sides could plainly see the main positions over it. This strip was also no great hindrance to movement, as was abundantly shown by experience. There was sufficient room on both sides of the Mance to post brigades side by side, and the strip of wood itself contained several clear spaces, of which the largest lay immediately north and south of the main road. In addition to the paths which passed through it, the strip of wood was passable for companies and sections without losing their order, and even cavalry could, in places (for example, to the south of the main road), make their way through it. The Bois de Vaux was very similar; but, on the other hand, the Bois des Génivaux was throughout a great obstacle to movement. I passed through it at a later date in all directions, and in many places I could not make my way without tearing my clothes. This is not of much importance for our present purpose, but the northernmost part of the strip of wood, to the north of the main road, was of the same character.

Character  
of the  
woods.

The highest point on the western row of hills was to the south-west of Verneville, while that of the enemy's position was at Point du Jour (1102),\* while the line of heights thence to the centre of the front of battle was over 1080, but from that point fell to 1050 (at St. Privat) and 1014 (at Roncourt). The command of the centre line of hills, running north and south, over the western row, was in the southern part less, and in the northern more than 100 feet. The French army had been in position on it since the afternoon of the 17th of August. The proportion between the eastern and the central rows of hills was not so different, but to any one coming from the west the former showed in some degree as a background to the latter, which, with everything which moved on it, stood out fairly sharply against it. On that day there would have been no difficulty, even without a glass, in distinguishing from the centre row of hills the advance of the Germans, if any one had wished to do so; and, in a similar manner, they, after the afternoon of the 17th, might have ascertained with certainty what was going on on the centre row of hills, how far the French position extended to the north, and how much it was being strengthened. But both enemies failed to make the necessary arrangements for this purpose, so that the French knew no more about the Germans than the Germans about the French.

Relation of  
the heights  
on each  
side to  
each other.

The clearness of the weather greatly enlarged the field of view; The from noon on the 17th to noon on the 18th (or up to the beginning of the battle), the sky was cloudless, and the pale-yellow line of the centre hills, which were chalky and bare, showed sharply against weather.

\* All heights are in feet.

the dark background; any advance might therefore have been observed by the German patrols, with the naked eye and without any risk. So, at least, one thinks, when one wanders to-day from west to east along either of the main roads named above; but on the 17th of August, and even up to the morning of the 18th, the Germans gave quite insufficient attention to the more northern of the two.

The thermometer at noon stood at 86 degrees Fahrenheit.

The road  
Rezonville,  
Gravelotte,  
Metz, with  
its lateral  
communi-  
cations.

The road from Gravelotte to Metz, which is about sixteen yards wide, runs through the above-mentioned strip of wood, between the Bois des Génivaux and the Bois de Vaux. Starting from Gravelotte on a downward slope over open ground, the road at the strip of wood assumes more and more the character of a cutting; thence by an embankment, at the highest point about twenty feet in height, and bounded right and left by walls knee-high, it passes over the Mance, whence again it runs through a cutting for about 250 yards to St. Hubert on the eastern slope. This road, which was in great part swept by the enemy's fire, was necessarily a bad line of approach for the Germans, especially since its eastern exit lay within the enemy's effective infantry fire. When bodies of troops had once entered it, they had no power to take ground to the right or left, but could, while in the wood, go only forwards or backwards. This was the case as regarded cavalry and artillery even on the eastern slope, where the road ceased to run in a cutting, for a little way to the front, in an easterly direction, were quarries on both sides of the road, and these forbade the mounted arms to diverge on to open ground. For the above reasons, this could not be called a road, but was really a long and fairly wide defile; this statement is little affected by the fact that it might easily have been arranged to pass through the strip of wood to the north or south of the road with infantry in good order and in small, closed bodies. From Gravelotte the road ran in a gentle curve, bowed slightly towards the north, as far as the height (1076) on the farther side of the ravine; at that point it turned almost at right angles to the south, making from the corner a strongly marked bow to the south. The first part is 2400 yards, the latter, up to Rozerieulles 3500 yards in length. The road was lined with poplars, and, except at the part which passed through the strip of wood, could be followed with the naked eye, until it turned again to the east at a level with the southern edge of the quarry of Rozerieulles. The part of the road from the height 1076 to where on the south it turns round to the east, and even farther, was for half its length shut in by knee-high walls. Its general line offered a desirable and strong front of defence. Following this line, the French had filled up the open spaces in the wall with shelter-trenches of suitable profile, in all cases sufficient to cover and hide strong firing-lines, while the wall itself was provided with loopholes.

Two hundred and twenty yards to the east of the point on the eastern slope, where the road ceases to run in a cutting, were quarries on either side for a distance of about 220 yards, and about 160 yards to the east of these again began the western garden wall of the farm of St. Hubert. From the quarries and to the south of the main road

a track passable for artillery ran almost straight to the main road, which it joined after the latter had bent to the south, at a point about 270 yards to the south of the height 1076. A second road, passable for all arms, ran from the Mance mill through the Bois de Vaux, turned to the north at its eastern edge, and, running along it, joined the main road at the point where the latter issued from the strip of wood on the eastern slope of the ravine. A branch of this road ran in an easterly direction to the height 1081. A third road, passable for all arms, ran from the northern part of the Mance Valley, by the farm of St. Hubert, striking the main road to the east of the farm at an acute angle; this gave an easy line of approach from Malmaison. Owing to the thick underwood which filled the valley, these three roads were the only means of communication along a front of 4400 yards. The exits of both the side roads, from the Mance mill and Malmaison, just as was the case with the main road, were all within effective range of the French, since the greatest distance of either of them from Point du Jour or Moscou was about 1200 yards.

Point du Jour and Moscou were two small white buildings, visible from a considerable distance, and distant about 1300 yards from each other. This comparatively small space, 1300 yards broad and 1200 yards deep, was at a later hour the battle-field upon which three German Corps were promiscuously crowded and jumbled together. Point du Jour, which consisted of two buildings about 100 yards apart, was, for three-quarters of its circumference, surrounded by a wall of moderate section, which was provided with flanks towards the south and north-west. This wall gave cover against infantry fire only, and not against artillery, and on this point, as on Moscou, the German artillery directed such a specially hot fire that at the end of the battle the small portion of either of them which remained uninjured by the flames was entirely swept away. At these points hardly any French were found killed or wounded by infantry bullets; almost all had been destroyed by the fire of the guns. In the large heaps of ruins, which, without an interval, extended from Point du Jour to Moscou, the defenders, especially in Moscou, lay all around, fearfully torn and mutilated by the German shell; limbs and bodies were blown from thirty to fifty paces apart, and the stones and sand were here and there covered with pools of blood. In Moscou and Point du Jour some French were found burnt in their defensive positions, and a large number of the wounded showed marks of the flames, which had destroyed both uniforms and limbs. All around there lay rifles and swords, knapsacks and cartridges, the remains of limbers which had been blown up, broken gun-carriages and wheels, and a large number of hideously torn and mangled horses. The ground was changed by the German artillery fire into a desert covered with many corpses. The interiors of Point du Jour and Moscou were not passable after the battle, until they had been cleared. The courtyard of Point du Jour was smaller than those of Moscou and St. Hubert; on the other hand, that front of Point du Jour which faced the Germans was longer than were those of the two other farms.

Point du  
Jour,  
Moscou,  
and St.  
Hubert.

The farm of Moscou was rectangular in shape, and the longer side which faced to the south-west was turned towards the Germans. The dwelling-house stood in the centre of a garden and farmyard, which were surrounded by knee-high walls; the stables were on that shorter side which faced the north. The walls of the garden and of the farmyard, as also those of the house, were pierced with loopholes; the longer side was about 200 yards in length. The massive building, which stood as much in the open as Point du Jour, afforded an even better target to the German artillery. On the right and left shelter-trenches were connected with the walls of the garden and farmyard.

The farm of St. Hubert, a building of white stone, lay 770 yards to the west of the others, on the naked slope. The two-storied dwelling-house, which stood close to the main road, had both stories prepared for defence; one stable lay to the west and another to the north. The western wall of the farmyard had no opening, the entrance to the house from the road was not closed, and a large opening had been made in the east side of the garden wall. Along the north-western edge of St. Hubert a track, passable for all arms, ran from the main road to Moscou. This, as well as another track which ran into it from the height 1102, was enclosed by shelter-trenches. The farm and garden, which were surrounded by a knee-high wall, formed almost an isosceles triangle, of which the narrow western side (150 yards long) was turned towards the Germans, as they approached it from the main road. Of the two longer sides, which were about 250 yards in length, and formed an acute angle towards the east, the southern had but small tactical value for the French, since from it an oblique fire only was possible; the northern had no value at all as a fire position. The shape was thus not favourable for defence, a point which was the more important, since the range from the west front of the farm to the eastern edge of the wood was about 440 yards. Moscou, Point du Jour, and St. Hubert had together the appearance of a great white bastion projecting far towards the west, of which the northern side was 1100 and the southern 1000 yards in length; but both sides were open, except for the walls of the farms.

St. Hubert  
and the  
gravel-pits.

A thousand yards to the south of the farm, of which the walls were pierced with loopholes, and about 200 yards east of the eastern edge of the wood, were a couple of gravel-pits. The farm of St. Hubert and the gravel-pits served to some extent as an advanced position to the main position, Point du Jour-Moscou. The French had not made any covered communications between the two positions, and Point du Jour and Moscou were in no way altered into small forts (as is stated in the Official Account); the French had confined themselves to making loopholes in the walls, and had thrown up to the right and left shelter-trenches of strong profile, which, as trustworthy eye-witnesses have assured me, showed throughout no systematic character, but gave the impression of being hastily prepared, with the result that as a whole they could not be considered good. To the south-west of Point du Jour was a large stone-quarry, which projected like a bastion; the angle of the main road to Metz which lay to the

east of it furnished an end to the front strong by nature, and with retired flanks. Along the main road by Point du Jour, up to Moscou, and yet farther to the north, were shelter-trenches which were to some extent connected with each other, and from which Point du Jour and Moscou projected like two strong flanks. These defences, which were perceptible with the naked eye from the neighbourhood of Gravelotte, and were quite recognizable by the aid of a glass, were traced at various irregular angles, so that it was possible to keep up a cross-fire along the whole front. Moreover, the field-works at the flanks (Point du Jour and Moscou) consisted of several tiers of fire lying one behind the other.

Since their main position had such a favourable and strong front, the French would have done better to have entirely destroyed St. Hubert, and to have levelled it to the ground. That they did not do so leads us to believe that they intended to use St. Hubert (in combination with the gravel-pits) as the pivot for an effectual offensive. There was no artillery at St. Hubert; the guns stood, in three easily perceptible groups, behind strong cover, between Point du Jour and Moscou, and were placed in a half-circle in such a manner that they could open a concentrated fire upon the exit of the Mance road.

Why was not St. Hubert destroyed?

The French front sloped continually and almost regularly from the main position to the eastern edge of the woods which ran along the Mance Valley. Considering the great range of the French rifles, and the fact that the French knew the distances, there was here an excellent opportunity for the long-range fire of infantry; as a matter of fact, it proved extraordinarily effective. Under such circumstances, the French could wish for nothing better than an energetic attack by the Germans; while, if ever impregnable positions existed, these were they, though, indeed, General Frossard might at this point have done greater credit to his career as an officer of Engineers.

Character of the slope of the heights.

While the French position, owing to the narrowness of its ridge, had in the centre too little depth, in consequence of which it was necessary in great part to keep the troops crowded together, yet in the portion of which we are now speaking this depth was as much as from a mile to 2000 yards: The troops were therefore not hampered in their movements, and they could also easily draw back out of the hostile fire and return quickly into the main position, an advantage which the French well knew how to utilize.

Depth of the position.

Almost 4500 yards to the eastward of the above-mentioned position, Marshal Bazaine held the battle reserve, the Imperial Guard, at his disposition, while the reserve artillery was between the forts of St. Quentin and Plappeville. The Châtel Ravine was undoubtedly a considerable obstacle to the movement of the reserve in the direction of Gravelotte, but if timely information had been obtained, the reserve might have come up there in ample time. (As a matter of fact, this actually did happen on this flank in the case of the attack of the Voltigeur Brigade of the Guard.) Again, no assailant could simply rush such a position, and the struggle for it must occupy several hours, while the beginning of a perceptible pressure would mark the moment at which the reserve should advance to it; this

Selection of the position for the reserve.



pressure was reported to Bazaine in ample time. In any case, when once his dispositions for the battle had detailed the reserve to the left flank, the nature of the ground left Bazaine no choice. The position where it was posted was, from Bazaine's point of view, the most suitable, since from there ran communications to Point du Jour and Leipzig Farm, as well as to St. Privat. The marshal could push his reserve thence to the north or the south, but could do nothing with it, except with the infantry, in the centre of the battle, since there were there neither tracks nor paths. Nevertheless, the position of the reserve had two disadvantages: 1. The communications to all parts of the line of battle were insufficient, and the distance of the reserve from that line, especially from St. Privat ( $6\frac{1}{4}$  miles) was too great. But it is seldom possible to find a position for the Reserve which will fulfil all requirements. For, with regard to this point, it is impossible to know beforehand what the enemy intends to do, and equally impossible to judge how the course of events will run; thus the choice of the position for the reserve affects in a marked degree the universal suitability of the dispositions for battle, and the manner of its selection affords good grounds by which to judge of the capacity of a general. Napoleon I. is an excellent example of this point. If the position of the reserve be selected with reference to one contingency alone, as was the case here with Bazaine, it will then not be available for the other cases. Such an arrangement must, moreover, end in complete failure when this one contingency is foreign to the intentions of the enemy; this, also, was the case here. But even if Bazaine feared to be cut off from Metz, it would have been sufficient, considering the strength of the position on his left flank, to have placed a brigade in rear of the 2nd Corps, while the whole of the remainder of the reserve should, if posted in accordance with the intentions of the marshal, have belonged to the neighbourhood of Amanvillers, where he himself should have been. In that case it might have been possible for him to bring up his reserve in time. As matters turned out, the loss of the battle is solely to be attributed to the marshal's faulty selection of his own position and of that of the reserve. We have no certain knowledge whether opinions of this kind existed at the French head-quarters, but in any case they came too late. 2. The marshal could not avoid the disadvantages of the position of the reserve, but if he nevertheless held to this position, he might at least have arranged for the suitable and regular transmission of information, and have kept the roads to St. Privat unencumbered. Both these precautions were neglected. So far we have dealt only with Marshal Bazaine. But Marshal Canrobert deserves even more blame. In the very place where a skilful fortification of the position would have been most necessary, that is to say in the neighbourhood of St. Privat, nothing of the kind was carried out. An excuse has been found for this in the fact that the 6th Corps had no engineer park; but this must be rejected, since even with the means at hand a considerable amount of fortification might have been carried out, even in the time which was available. Moreover Bazaine had impressed upon Canrobert that he should take up a concentrated position at

St. Privat; yet the latter did exactly the opposite, since he extended his troops immoderately, even to the quarries of Jaumont. This mistake was doubly fatal, since Marshal Canrobert did nothing towards the strengthening of the position, but simply left everything alone. This was in direct tactical disaccordance with the dispositions ordered. Again, Marshal Canrobert had ample time, even on the 17th of August, to ask for engineers; but he did nothing of the kind, nor did he send in any report of value concerning what was going on in his front, until it was too late for it to be of use.

It is impossible satisfactorily to discuss the events on one portion of a battle-field, without remarking on the most important occurrences which took place on the other portions; for this reason, the latter have been here briefly alluded to.

Six thousand yards to the east of the German line of battle lay the forts of St. Quentin and Plappeville. This distance was too great to admit of their taking any part in the action; but, nevertheless, in the case of a calamity, they formed a support in rear of the French left flank. Everything considered, careful and systematic preparation and deliberation were necessary, if it was proposed to attack, and to capture, such a position as this. The forts of St. Quentin and Plappeville.

Among these advantages must be counted the fact that the lie of the ground allowed the French to observe everything which went on on the western side of the Mance Ravine. If they noticed movements of attack in the neighbourhood of Gravelotte, they could fairly well calculate when the Germans would advance from the Mance Valley, and could prepare to receive them; for the French position commanded the German. As a matter of fact, this was exactly what the French did! Our men could be watched, but, on the other hand, could not watch the enemy so well as might have been wished. When the Germans began the assault from the eastern edge of the ravine they found, with the exception of St. Hubert, no cover along the wide space in their front. Advantages of command of site.

The French left St. Hubert standing, and the Germans captured it; but, nevertheless, as will be shown later on, it was impossible that St. Hubert should play the part which it must have played had the attack been better prepared, in which case the French position, strong as it was, might have been captured. The Germans had many advantages on their side. The ground with reference to the attack.

In the first place, their artillery was far superior to that of the enemy, both in number and efficiency. So far as the artillery positions were concerned, the difference in height of the two positions had not much effect, since that difference was everywhere small (1063 to 1102 feet on the French side, and 1009 to 1011 feet on the German), and it was possible, as competent eye-witnesses have assured me, to see fairly well with the naked eye from the German line of guns all that went on in the French artillery and infantry positions. Indeed, there was no particular difficulty in silencing the French artillery. Moreover, the German artillery line to a marked extent overlapped that of the enemy, and circumstances, so to speak, caused it to be concentrated from the beginning.

In the second place, the advanced corners of the Bois de Vaux, which jutted out towards Point du Jour, were from the morning of the 17th in the possession of detachments of troops of the 14th Division; while, on the other hand, the western edges of the Bois des Génivaux remained up to the morning of the 18th in the hands of the French, so that that wood had to be captured. After this had been done, the French abandoned the whole of the western part of the Mance Valley. Thus the Germans obtained a certain amount of advantage from this valley, supposing that they intended to make an attack in earnest upon the position Point du Jour-Moscov. This was undoubtedly their intention.

The Mance Valley as the point of departure of an attack from the west.

Leaving this out of the question, favourable tactical opportunities may offer themselves in the course of a battle, which may induce a leader to act contrary to the general plan; but in such a case he must be certain as to his duty. Such a point seemed at least worth considering, and it especially suited the hasty temperament of General von Steinmetz. If thought had been given to it, the ground about the Mance must have been regarded as to some extent the starting-point for a later infantry attack, as the great place of assembly for the preparation of such an attack and for the purpose of, later on, feeding the attack from thence. Moreover, this was favoured by the great breadth of the bottom of the valley, which also varied little throughout. For this reason the valley of the Mance, as regarded the infantry, partook first of the character of a tactical preparatory position, and nothing more, but yet one which might be of use should favourable conditions arise. The communications with it were bad, consisting only of the three named above, while of these the main road had its exit under the concentrated fire of the enemy. Nevertheless, it might have been possible to have allowed infantry in companies to make their way through to the north and south of the main road from Gravelotte, and to have got them again into order after they had thus reached the Mance Valley. The Official Account, when speaking of these incidents, mentions always the "thick wood," as if it would have been impossible to march through it in order, and to make tactical use of it. This is incorrect and beside the mark, and no one has any right to thus gloss over the faults which were committed at this point, especially in the zone of influence of the leaders of lower rank. The thick underwood in no way prevented a passage, it merely rendered it difficult. "Where a man can stand, infantry must be able to march." This the Germans had learnt from Jackson and Lee. There was, moreover, no danger in thus pushing the infantry to the front, since from the moment when they entered the strips of wood, not only were they hidden from the sight of the enemy, but, in addition, the closer they came to the bed of the Mance the greater was the advantage of dead ground which they gained. They were really there as if in "Abraham's bosom," for they were under cover from fire, were only about 650 yards from the French advanced position, and could not be reached by the enemy.

Approaches to the

A "place of assembly for an attack" must have sufficient breadth

and depth, and also good and sufficient (in proportion with the numbers) communications to the rear. These were wanting. If the troops had entered the woods in close order, instead of in extended order, the difficulties which were found later on would in many cases not have arisen. But more should and ought to have been done, if there was any real idea of an attack in earnest. Such an attack was expressly ordered by von Moltke at 10.30 a.m., and ordered also to take place from Gravelotte and the Bois de Vaux. <sup>point of departure.</sup>

When Napoleon I., at 4 p.m. on the 13th of October, realized that there was no road to the "Steiger" which was passable for artillery, he at once saw the disadvantages of this point as a spot for the development of his attack. Moreover, Napoleon had then (before the battle) the narrow tracks which led to the enemy's position in his hands; this was not the case with the Germans before the battle. Napoleon at once ordered the construction of a road passable for artillery, and the work was completed by late in the evening of the 13th of October. It should have been considered, with regard to the passage of the Mance, whether anything of this kind was desirable, necessary, and practicable. If the enemy's position was to be seriously attacked, it was undoubtedly necessary. If what was necessary could not be carried out, then under such governing circumstances a serious attack should not have been made, and still less a serious pursuit, since in this case all requirements, as regarded freedom of development and of movement, would have been wanting. Leaving other troops out of the question, would it not have been very desirable to have brought up the 7th and 8th Pioneer Battalions, and to have given them up to 2 p.m. on the 18th, to cut two openings through the wood to the north and south of the main road, so as thus to have made the necessary communications to the rear. Their work would not have been much disturbed as far as the Mance, since up to there they would have been to some extent under cover. It is, however, certainly true that from that point on it would have been more difficult.

In order to carry out the clearing up to the eastern edge, the advanced position of St. Hubert gravel-pits had to be first captured. This was done, but nothing in the way of cutting roads was attempted, and this must be taken into account. After, however, the advanced position had been taken, the cutting through of the openings as far as the exit from the wood might have been easily managed up to 4.30 p.m., while not until that had been done could it be said that such arrangements for the development and the guidance, and also for the support of the masses of troops had been made as were rendered necessary by the intention to make a serious attack. (As a matter of fact this was attempted during these hours and was repulsed.) In this manner the enemy would have been compelled to divide his fire, and all the advantages attendant upon this would have favoured the attack; while, as it was, since things were allowed to go their own way, the enemy's fire continued to be concentrated in one and the same direction, which must be considered as the main cause of the long chain of German misfortunes. <sup>Exits from the point of departure.</sup>

Any one who judges, not only from the map, but by going himself to the place itself, and bears well in mind the course of events, will confess that what we have proposed must have been the only (and a practicable) way to success. At least, there was no other.

Reasons for  
the tactical  
necessity  
for arti-  
ficial com-  
munica-  
tions.

Not every leader of an army can be a Napoleon, but it is possible for every leader of an army to know what to do in such cases, and every general must reconnoitre from the proper points! If this had been done, the Mance Valley would have offered great advantages to the assailant; an approach to the advanced position which was not watched, and which was only in part under fire, the possibility of deploying, and good communications to the rear. What has been done cannot be undone, but we can learn much from our faults. Positions such as are now in question will in the future be probably more common; only they may be somewhat more strengthened, and perhaps with fewer favourable conditions for approach, and it will certainly be obligatory, if we are to do our duty, to attack such positions in front, even when it is intended that the action shall be decided on the flank. Let us imagine the attacking infantry to be in possession of the firearms of to-day; what stupendous loss will the defender have to suffer from them alone! In the case now before us there was another main preliminary condition; no gun should have joined in the action from the west of the Mance Valley, and no gun should have been brought across that valley, but, on the other hand, the artillery ought to have fired from the Bois de Vaux against the left flank of the French. Tacticians might deduce this from Napoleon's method of handling guns. The infantry, however, could not be better supported by the artillery in the present case, since the latter had been left on the west of the Mance Valley.

The lie of the rows of hills of which we have spoken dictated, on the 18th of August, without any question, the positions and the action of the artillery of both sides. The German line of guns extended almost exactly north and south, in one continuous line of fire; this was not the case with the French artillery. The character of the exit of the main road, its further direction on St. Hubert, and the tracks which led from it to the north and south, demanded that the French artillery should be posted in groups, which might, in the case of an infantry attack, concentrate their fire against this, the only direction in which it could be developed, and thus against the road from Gravelotte to Point du Jour. The disadvantages entailed by the discharge of this duty could not be entirely cancelled by entrenching the batteries; thus the French artillery could be, and were, attacked on both flanks, while the German had to guard its front only. The distance between the two artilleries was about 2200 yards. This range was known beforehand to the French, and the Germans very soon learnt it, so that, as competent eye-witnesses have informed me, almost every shell hit its mark. The French artillery, as a whole, however, shot equally well. Shell after shell fell in the German batteries, but most of them did not burst, or, if they did, occasioned little damage. The larger number of the shell passed on after their graze through the line of German artillery, and the ground on which



the guns stood was so cut up by them that the adjutants bringing orders had to ride with the greatest care. The French gun, then, was not bad, but the projectile, as we may now own, was indifferent.

If, in such cases as the above, a serious attack with some great object is intended, not only the enemy's artillery, but his infantry also, must be broken down by our fire. Artillery alone cannot do this, but must receive the necessary aid from the infantry; in order that the latter may work with the artillery, they must be able to extend and to occupy a fire-position. Nothing of this kind had been done as regards the infantry on the 18th of August, when, about 3.15 p.m., the artillery of the 7th Corps was pushed across the Mance Valley. The German artillery could see this along the whole length of their line, and they foresaw also the failure of the undertaking. The enemy's infantry even at 7 p.m. had not been broken down, while the German infantry, having no suitable fire-position, had not sufficiently co-operated together. Attacks which are always undertaken in the same direction must for this reason fail. The artillery effect of the present day has certainly much improved, but it still affords matter for some thought that about 132 German guns, after firing for seven hours against a front of about 2200 yards in length, had neither broken down or dispersed the enemy's infantry. It is possible to thus approximately estimate what would in these days befall an assailant under similar circumstances. Not St. Privat, but the Mance Ravine, is the typical fight of the future, and the occurrences at the latter, with respect to the instruction to be gained from them, throw all tactical events of 1870-71 into the shade.

It is certain that the assailant has no chance of victory until the enemy's infantry has been shaken, and if any one doubts this, the example now before us is a proof how long it may take to beat them down, and that the moment for the serious attack may not come until late in the evening or on the following day. For the French artillery did not throughout continue in action by the side of their infantry; on the contrary, the latter mainly fought alone, while the artillery came up beside them at critical moments only. This shows what infantry in such positions as these can do, in spite of all attendant disadvantages.

The openings through the woods ought, bearing in mind the situation of affairs, to have been so cut that it might have been possible to develop and attack, in good order, through two against Moscow and through two against the gravel-pits and Point du Jour. In the year 1873 I carefully examined the strips of wood, and a calculation made on the spot showed that if each pioneer battalion be taken at 800 men, each man would have had one tree, large or small, to fell. The small trees would not have needed more than two or three blows with the axe. If the pioneers had been systematically distributed with a due admixture of infantry supplied with entrenching tools, there would have been about 500 men to each cutting, and if the work had been begun simultaneously at four points, the men having been previously placed in position, each portion would have taken at most one hour. In this case everything might

Direction  
and posi-  
tion of the  
communi-  
cations.

have been carried out in the best order. I cannot gather any information as to whether the strips of wood had changed very much between 1870 and 1873; probably the greatest change would be that the trees would have gained in circumference by their three years of growth. The character of the ground in the strips of wood offered no obstacles to movement. When St. Hubert and the gravel-pits had been taken, the moment would have come to choose St. Hubert as a central point, in order to rush upon the shelter-trenches from the cuttings on both sides of the farm.

Fire-position for the infantry.

If two batteries were able to carry on a successful combat for hours at St. Hubert, at a range of 750 yards, and under a cross-fire from the enemy's artillery and infantry; if a regiment of Ulans (the 4th) stood fast for half an hour, and a hussar regiment (the 9th) even longer, it would really not have been too much to ask of pioneers and infantry that they should make shelter-trenches at the same range. But no one thought of anything of the kind. This must, however, be mentioned, since in the future tactical situations must arise which will call for an advance of this kind, for the purpose of gaining an effective fire-position, whence, wherever possible, the enemy must be fired on throughout the day, and whence, also, on the following day, the decisive attack must be made. On the 18th of August, 1870, a broad fire-front of this kind might have been obtained for the infantry, at about 450 yards from the enemy, which was ample for the arm which we then had. Yet 4000 men were lost, of whom the greater part might have been saved if the same number of trees had been cut down beforehand, and a corresponding number of spadefuls of earth had been thrown up; in spite of this, the great disinclination for such measures carried the day. How were we in this matter superior to the Americans? How did Lee's troops gain cover under the enemy's fire? They made miles of this sort of position, and with insufficient means, being driven to it by necessity. The Germans had good means at their disposal, but no one knew how to use them. Does any one ask as to the advantages of such a fire-position, we answer:—

(i.) It could have been easily reached from the rear, and (ii.) the troops could have distributed themselves along the front by the shortest way, and could have taken up a wide fire-position in which to work either in attack or in defence.

Every man, even the best soldier, now searches for cover. Since no cover was available, and none had been provided, the troops instinctively crowded together to the very points to which, tactically speaking, they ought not to have gone, especially to St. Hubert, until at last that farm looked like a bee-hive, while to the north and south of it there was no fire-position worth speaking of. At these points there were only irregular and far too weak groups, which looked like mere drops, could produce no possible effect, and later on, as is well known, were swept out of the way. This crowding together compelled the Germans to expose their flank to the main position, and to traverse an unnecessarily long distance before they could reach the bee-hive at St. Hubert. Continued fire effect was impossible from the forty-three

companies (finally increased to fifty-nine), who were huddled together in St. Hubert; it was not possible to take aim, and no aim was taken, since each company hindered the other, while at no time was the farm, tactically speaking, occupied. If, however, a prepared fire-position had been provided in this direction, there might have been a line of fire of about 2700 paces, for the continued defence and for the further preparation of which half of the troops which tormented each other in St. Hubert would have sufficed, while the other half could have been kept in reserve for emergencies. If any one maintains that such demands could not be met, he may find his answer in the fact that St. Hubert was taken and held without any real leading and that artillery and cavalry were able to hold their ground there for hours; if this could be done, the other could not have been too much to ask. Whatever happens, a soldier can only fall; that is what he is there for, and if he realizes this, and it is demanded of him, very much may be done.

I have on the very ground formed the opinion that the cutting the passages would probably have entailed no very serious losses, while the construction of shelter-trenches in conjunction with this cutting would perhaps have cost us, while the work was going on, one man for every ten who was sacrificed at a later hour, without any result being obtained. This is the way in which a tactician must look at it. If such measures had been taken, some direction and guidance would also have been possible, at least within certain definite bounds.

Even if we leave entirely out of account the question whether a serious attack was intended or ought to have been made, the cuttings through the wood were necessary for the formation of a suitable fire-line. We must clearly and strongly lay stress upon the fact that no such line actually existed along the whole front Moscou-Point du Jour, and even much farther to the south, though it would have been better in every respect to have formed one. The troops crowded together, either towards St. Hubert or to the gravel-pits. If the three existing roads had been used, and the four cuttings through the wood had been made, there would have been seven exits to the front, and it would thus have been seven times as easy to form a fire-line as it was in the actual case, when only one road was utilized. Much which happened here must be condemned, and rightly so, but with regard to one main point, we have no right to attack any one of the local leaders, though this has often been done. Even a defensive attitude, without going further, made it desirable for the 1st Army that infantry should take their stand on the eastern slope of the Mance Valley, while the manner in which the action was handled magnified this desirability into a peremptory tactical order, since only infantry and artillery combined can sufficiently prepare an attack. Moreover, the advance of strong bodies of infantry into the bottom of the valley, with the object of using it as a preliminary position, required the formation of a strong fire-line of infantry in its front. With this object, St. Hubert and the gravel-pits must of necessity have been attacked, captured, and

held, while such action went in no way beyond the sphere of the mere defensive. This was in accordance with the duty which, after 12 o'clock, was attributed to the 1st Army, and was, tactically speaking, quite correct. Such being the case, it is strange that no one had any idea as to how the needful line of fire was to be formed, and that no one realized, or at any time ordered, the correct means for carrying out the correct tactical idea. This is the more incomprehensible, since from the western heights of the Mance Valley it was possible, from the beginning to the end of the battle, to exactly observe with the naked eye every event which took place at St. Hubert. The defensive was first given up when the serious attack against the main position was ordered at a later hour. It is quite unnecessary to say that for the former attitude a strong line of infantry fire was at first most necessary. The attacks failed, as all such attacks must always fail, since the needful superiority of fire had not been obtained, and this was not obtained, because no fire-position was sought for, or made. If an attack is made under such conditions, a tactical law is broken, though it is so clear that even an ensign would not stumble over it. Indeed, whatever view of affairs was taken, and whatever might be ordered, a strong infantry fire-position on the eastern slope of the Mance Valley was an absolute necessity, whether for the offensive or for the defensive; there was no such fire-position by nature, and the existing lines of advance to such a position were both unfavourable and insufficient; consequently, the latter ought to have been first made, while from them the fire-position might have been established.

Why St.  
Hubert  
could be  
held.

In the tactical history of war, theory, however beautiful and logical it may be, must never be pressed too far, and care must be always taken to bear in mind how matters stood during the course of the successive hours. The first question that meets us is, How was it that St. Hubert was so comparatively easily taken, and how was it that forty-three, and even more, companies, though jumbled together, were able to hold it? If one goes to the actual place, and pictures to one's self the average defender, both of these, though they actually happened, appear impossible. If, on the other hand, one imagines one's self in the actual tactical situation, what was done becomes quite clear and natural. St. Hubert was comparatively easily taken; first, because the German artillery had before the storming so broken down that of the enemy, that the latter could no longer support their infantry at St. Hubert. According to information which I have received, the enemy's artillery was, at the moment of the crisis, silent along the whole of the line in question. Again, in the second place, the German artillery, after silencing the French, were able to so play upon St. Hubert that our gunners saw the French infantry bolt before the German infantry began the assault. When the latter also realized this, then, and not till then, they rushed forward from three sides against the farm. This does not diminish their glory; but the tactician has nothing to do with glory—he is concerned only with explanations, reasons, and proofs. Had the case been otherwise, but very few of

the French 80th Regiment would have escaped; whereas, the small number of prisoners made—only forty—speaks for itself.

How was it that forty-three and more companies could, without extraordinary loss, stand fast for so many hours in and around St. Hubert? If one goes to the farm, and examines the then main position of the French, one says to one's self that a single battery could in half an hour make it impossible for these companies to hold their ground. Every shot must have swept away the German infantry in heaps, and have thrown them into utter confusion. Was the battery, then, not there? Or were the French blind? Not at all; but the superiority of the German artillery was so great that the French came forward only at intervals, and even then shot badly. This is the disadvantage of drawing artillery back. As a rule, when a battery had once fired all its guns, it fell back again under cover. The French artillery, though still generally fit for action, fought in this manner on the left flank from about 4 p.m. It never succeeded in opening a systematic fire upon St. Hubert, for it was too closely watched. For this reason alone was it possible for those companies to huddle together and yet to hold the farm. Almost all the loss which the Germans suffered here was due simply to infantry fire, while all these companies did not shoot fifty French. The real truth is, that the victorious German artillery were the actual defenders of St. Hubert. As a proof of this fact, let us look at Point du Jour and Moscou. The German artillery had entirely destroyed these farms and defences, and when they both burst into flames their garrisons retired from them, and sought cover in the shelter-trenches to the right and left of them. These examples corroborate the opinion expressed above, that, if the French had been able to attack St. Hubert properly with artillery, it must have been abandoned by the masses which were crowded within it. These events teach us yet another lesson. Farm buildings, when once artillery have found their range, are not only no longer of any value, but are absolutely disadvantageous, especially if they are built of stone. It is not possible then either for a garrison to hold them, nor for a reserve to stand behind them. Extemporized cover is preferable; the French continued to hold their ground in such cover, after the farms had been abandoned.

Some one may ask, What has all this to do with the subject of which we were speaking? I will tell you. These concrete tactical facts were quoted in order to prove that the execution of the cuttings through the wood and of the fire-position was made perfectly easy to the Germans by the superiority of their artillery. If a defender is so occupied and thrashed that he must draw back his artillery, and must for hours abandon all offensive action, the necessary preliminary conditions must exist, which, so to speak, guarantee the possibility of carrying out such measures as we have mentioned. We have dwelt upon this, not because it is theoretically pretty, but because the concrete tactical situation in this case called for these explanations.

Reasons  
for the  
possibility  
of the  
formation  
of a fire-  
position.



Would the situation have thus been improved; and would an attack have been successful? Of the first there can be no doubt; it might have been as much improved as it was possible for it to be. Whether the attack would have succeeded depends upon the circumstances, and upon other measures working to the same end against the left flank of the French. But if it had failed, at any rate the right thing would have been done, and no one could have blamed the mode of action.

Quarries  
of Rozeri-  
eulles and  
the height  
1081.

If this question be so treated, it may be said that a combined effort with strong forces, which must have been prepared beforehand to act on a common plan, against the quarries of Rozerieulles and the height 1081, would form the general preliminary condition for an attack. It was easier to advance from that direction, since the quarries of Rozerieulles, which were not more than three hundred yards from the edge of the wood, could be captured under a concentrated infantry fire; in short, an attack was at this point possible. The quarries were finally captured by a handful of men, without any regular preparation, and were permanently held. But General von Steinmetz had not recognized the importance of these things, although on the 17th of August detachments of troops of the 14th Division had occupied those edges of the Bois de Vaux which jutted out towards this flank. A strong force of artillery would also have been required at this point.

The good beginning, to which Steinmetz was incited by Moltke, remained without any consequence. Instead of splitting up the 14th Division, one brigade should have been placed in a preparatory position at the Mance mill, and the other at the north-east border of the Bois de Vaux. One brigade would have been sufficient to meet Lapasset's brigade, the three others of the 7th Corps ought, in accordance with the intentions to attack the front (Moscou-Point du Jour), to have worked principally against the flank of this front. At least, this was the only way to crush the enemy. General von Steinmetz hoped to do this, indeed the thought of doing so did not leave him throughout the day; but in that case the general ought to have made suitable dispositions. But it seems impossible to harmonize his wishes and his dispositions. With this object, the attack from Gravelotte and from the Bois de Vaux were at 10 a.m. most essential. But everything connected with the 1st Army came to absolute grief, and after the capture of St. Hubert we find no example of the sensible handling of any considerable force. The distribution of the troops of the 7th Corps made any handling on a large scale very difficult; but this was all the more reason why General von Steinmetz should have taken a correct view, should have understood the orders which he received, should have moderated the rashness of his temperament, and should not have allowed the troops to run in upon an enemy, who could be plainly seen to be lying, still unbroken, in his shelter-trenches. Moltke's orders to the 1st Army were so clear and suitable that it is impossible to understand—at least, when we realize the situation of the moment—how any inclination to act in opposition to them could have arisen.

Everything which took place up to the capture of St. Hubert was in accordance with what General von Steinmetz had to do; after this, all went wrong, and the series of his mistakes commences from that hour. These mistakes depend not upon whether he should have made, or should have wished to make, a serious attack, but upon the fact that he made it without looking to the preliminary conditions, and that he carried it out against the enemy's front (an error constantly repeated) without making at least one real effort to turn the southern flank from the Bois de Vaux, as had been distinctly directed by the order of 10.30 a.m. To endeavour to force on a decision at this point, and even to think of a pursuit, when a mere glance at the map must have shown that this was impossible, was sufficient to bring everything to grief. The actual disaster was at this point alone, but its consequences showed everywhere; among the leaders of the army, among the commanders of the smaller and of the larger bodies of troops, and among the troops themselves. It was, indeed, from whichever side we look at it, perhaps the most detestable example of war of our times. And then to think that almost all this might have been avoided; but thousands of the most incredible things were done at this point, brought about for the most impossible reasons. That which was not was believed to be; that which was obviously forbidden it was desired to do; that which it was desired to do (which was impossible of execution) was undertaken, owing to continual mistakes as to the means, by the worst possible ways, and the genius has yet to be born who by his skilful touch could have brought all this into order—to then serve as a warning for the future.

## VI.

## THE OCCUPATION OF THE POSITION FROM MOSCOU TO STE. RUFFINE.

Composition and strength of the 2nd French Army-Corps.

WHEN we consider the resistance of the French force, we must bear in mind that the principal part of it did not consist of fresh troops. It was formed of the 2nd French Army-Corps under General Frossard. This corps had suffered very considerably at Spicheren on the 6th, and at Vionville on the 16th of August, and had since then received no reinforcements. Its loss in killed, wounded, and missing amounted (according to a statement in the "Kriegsgeschichtlichen Einzelschriften") to 5500 at Spicheren, and 5286 at Vionville, altogether 10,786, including officers. It is, therefore, scarcely correct to speak of it as an army-corps, since the troops which remained made up little more than a skeleton. So much the higher must we estimate the tenacity of their resistance after such heavy loss.

The 2nd Corps consisted of three divisions, of which, however, the 3rd (Laveaucoupet) did not take part in the combat of the 18th of August, even with its artillery, since it was told off to act as the garrison of Metz. For this reason Lapasset's Brigade of the 5th Corps formed a support on the left flank of the 2nd Corps, on the line Rozericulles-Ste. Ruffine-Moulins. This was composed of the 84th and 97th Regiments of the line, one company of the 14th Chasseurs, and one battery, to which later on were added one or two batteries of the Guard.

General Frossard, therefore, on the 18th of August, commanded two divisions and the artillery reserve of his corps, with one brigade (Lapasset's); he had no cavalry at all, since of these there were none available along the whole line from Leipzig to Ste. Ruffine. In the "Kriegsgeschichtlichen Einzelschriften" the strength of this force, omitting Lapasset's Brigade, is reckoned at 23 battalions and 12 batteries (of which two were armed with mitrailleuses), having 10,810 rifles and 72 guns (of which 12 were mitrailleuses).

The statements of strength given in the "Einzelschriften" are furnished by the well-known statistician Major H. Kunz, and since their appearance I have obtained the following from more recent sources; this shows some slight difference. According to this information, the French 2nd Corps on the 18th of August consisted of 11,610 rifles, of which Vergé's Division contained 5620, and Bastoul's 5990.

Composition and

Lapasset's Brigade counted 3310 rifles, Nayard's Division 6820, Metman's 7450, and Aymard's 7950; the latter three were of 3rd

Army-Corps. These troops had suffered much less loss in action than the 2nd Corps, and the battalions were thus much stronger. About half of Metman's Division was engaged with the German 9th Corps; Nayard's Division remained almost altogether out of action, but on the other hand Aymard's Division was fully engaged. The total, therefore, amounted to 26,595 rifles, made up as follows:—

	Rifles.
2nd Army-Corps ... ..	11,610
Lapasset's Brigade ... ..	3,310
Half of Metman's Division ... ..	3,725
Aymard's Division ... ..	7,950
Total ..	26,595

Moreover, to the 72 guns must be added the three batteries of Aymard's Division. It is impossible to ascertain whether there were at Moscou any batteries from the reserve artillery of the 3rd corps, but there might very well have been some. This question must, however, remain open. There were then altogether in action on this front 90 guns, of which certainly 18 were mitrailleuses. This is the smallest number which can have been there. There were thus on a front of 3300 yards (from Moscou to Rozerieulles) 23,295 rifles and 90 guns, or without artillery eight men to the pace, or with artillery more than eight men. Since the French main position of which we are speaking lay from 450 to 550 yards from the fighting line of the German infantry, which was on the level of St. Hubert and the gravel-pit, and since the French rifle had very good effect at this range, it was possible for the French to keep up an annihilating fire, provided only that there was a sufficient supply of cartridges. All the above-named rifles and guns came gradually into action after midday. Marshal Leboeuf (3rd Corps) brought up his last reserve, the 41st of the line, belonging to the 2nd Division. Since already, at "about midday," the 1st Brigade of the Voltigeurs of the Guard had been sent to the assistance of Marshal Leboeuf, the number given above must be increased by 6 battalions, each of 475 men, and therefore by 2850; so that "about midday" there were 26,135 rifles on the front Rozerieulles-Moscou. But the "about midday," considering the distance of the reserves from the line of battle, can scarcely have been before 3 p.m. At about the same time (3 p.m.) Bazaine started the 2nd Division of the Guard (Grenadiers) towards St. Privat, after having already sent off the reserve artillery in that direction. Lapasset's Brigade was also at this time reinforced by a battery. Thus from 3 p.m. there were about nine men to the pace, without counting the artillery. Leboeuf also placed the 2nd Voltigeur Regiment of the Guard in the fighting line, so that only one Infantry Regiment remained to him as a reserve. The whole of the infantry of the 2nd Corps (Frossard) gradually took part in the fight, with the exception of one regiment of the 2nd Division (the 67th), which the general kept as a reserve in rear of Châtel St. Germain. The 84th Regiment of Lapasset's Brigade did not share in the battle; the

brigade thus had  $3\frac{1}{2}$  battalions and 1 battery, or 1710 rifles and 6 guns.

Occupation  
of the  
position.

The line of defence of so much of the 3rd Corps as we must here notice stretched from the height 975 on the north of Moscou to 440 yards to the south of that farm. The 1st Division of the 2nd Corps (Vergé's) extended from this spot, in shelter-trenches and in Point du Jour, up to the point where the main road from Gravelotte turned to the east, on a level with the quarries of Rozerieulles, while the 2nd Division (Bastoul) up to about 3 p.m. held the flank of these quarries. We may therefore say that the French generals in some degree expended their whole strength, and that no force of any value remained at their disposal for the purpose of renewing the battle on the 19th. Every one therefore recognized on the evening of the 18th the impossibility of renewing the battle, and from this feeling sprang the belief that a retreat was obligatory. Even the last gun of the artillery must have been in action. Marshal Leboeuf had one line of artillery placed to the north and south of Moscou, with the object of firing from the flank upon the high-road; General Frossard's artillery stood from the height 1102 as far as the north of Point du Jour, and fired at the same road from the front; while it also occupied a second artillery position to the south of the "old quarry," whence it attacked the Bois de Vaux.

In other respects the distribution of the troops was at the beginning of the battle, so far as can be discovered at the present day, as follows:—

Metman's Division—The 17th and 29th Regiments, apparently in reserve, in shelter-trenches and in the Bois des Génivaux, with one company of the 1-7th pushed forward towards the Mance Valley between Leipzig and Moscou; the 59th Regiment in and around Moscou; three companies of the 2-7th in the Bois des Génivaux, with the remainder of the regiment in rear as a reserve; the 7th Battalion of Chasseurs in the Bois des Génivaux.

Aymard's Division—The 44th Regiment in shelter-trenches on both sides of Moscou, with the 3rd Battalion in rear of that farm; the 3-60th in the Bois des Génivaux, close to the high-road, with the 2-60th in and around Moscou, and the 1st Battalion in rear; the 11th Battalion of Chasseurs to the south of Moscou, in connection with the 2nd Corps; the 2-80th in St. Hubert, three companies of the 1-80th in rear in shelter-trenches, two companies of the same battalion in shelter-trenches between the two houses of Point du Jour, and the remaining company in shelter-trenches from Point du Jour to the bend of the road, the 3-80th in reserve behind the bend of the road; the 1-85th in shelter-trenches to the north of St. Hubert, the 2-85th and two companies of the 3rd Battalion to the left of Moscou in reserve, and four companies of the 3-85th as an artillery escort to the right of Point du Jour.

Vergé's Division—The 3rd Battalion of Chasseurs in Point du Jour; the 55th Regiment in shelter-trenches to the left of that farm, and the 32nd Regiment in rear; to the south, and connected with the 55th, were the 76th and the 77th Regiments in the quarries of Rozerieulles and their neighbourhood.



Bastoul's Division—The 23rd Regiment to the east of the quarries in shelter-trenches; to the east, again, the 12th Battalion of Chasseurs; and in rear the 8th Regiment. The 66th and 67th Regiments were in reserve to the south-west of Châtel St. Germain.

The disposition of the troops as well as the computation of their strength (as given above) differ very much from those stated in the Official Account, for since the publication of the latter many things have been cleared up which could not be known at the time of its appearance.

In order that the reader may form a good idea of the fighting strength of the Germans, which was gradually brought into action against the strip of ground from Moscou to Rozerieulles, the following statement is given.

There were present: Of the 7th Corps, 17 battalions and 14 batteries; of the 8th Corps, 23½ battalions and 15 batteries; of the 2nd Corps, 11½ battalions and 2 batteries; of the 1st Corps, one battery (of the 1st Cavalry Division); or—

					Rifles.	Guns.
7th Corps	...	...	...	...	13,800	82
8th Corps	...	...	...	...	20,445	90
2nd Corps	...	...	...	...	10,335	12
1st Corps	...	...	...	...	—	6
Total				...	44,580	190

From these must be deducted those troops of the 8th Corps which acted in a northerly direction; namely, the 7th, 8th, 9th, 11th, and 12th companies of the 69th Regiment; the 5th company of the 28th Regiment; the 5th, 7th, 8th, and 12th companies of the 67th Regiment; the 5th company of the 60th Regiment; and the 1st and 3rd Battalions of the 40th Regiment, or altogether 4½ battalions, which, assuming in round numbers 900 rifles to the battalion, gave a total of 4275 rifles; thus on the German side 40,310 rifles and 190 guns took part in the fight in the Mance Ravine. Considering the position, this force was not too great, and was certainly not so, if we remember that the Germans came gradually into action during the course of seven hours, while the French, soon after the beginning of the battle, had, so to speak, all their rifles and guns at their disposal.

## VII.

## THE STRUGGLES IN THE MANCE RAVINE.

A. *Up to the Capture of St. Hubert (3 p.m.) and of the Southern portion of the Rozerieulles Quarries.*

As to the  
sequence of  
command.

It is necessary, before the struggles in the Mance Ravine are related and critically considered, to make some remarks with regard to the system of army command, and also with reference to the mixture of men from various parts of the country which resulted from the crowding together of the confused fractions of troops.

After 2 p.m. on the 17th, the 8th Corps was withdrawn from the command of General von Steinmetz, and, in consequence, support was ordered to be given to him by the second line; moreover, the headquarters had reserved to themselves the disposal of the 3rd Corps, though this in the course of the morning of the 18th was given back to Prince Frederic Charles. The line of battle of the Germans was formed during the battle in two distinct lines: in the first, passing from right to left, were the 7th, 8th, and 9th, Guard, and 12th Corps; in the second, also from right to left, stood the 2nd, 3rd, and 10th, and also the 5th and 6th Cavalry Divisions. In the course of the afternoon of the 18th of August, General von Steinmetz expressly received the command of the 2nd Corps, so that the flanks of the line of battle consisted of three corps each, while the centre was composed of two. Thus the centre of the line, since there was but one corps in first line, seems comparatively long and thin, while the flanks on the other hand were massed and strong. For the 9th Corps extended over nearly 5500 yards, while the 7th, 8th, and 2nd occupied about 7100; indeed, in the struggle against the front of Point du Jour, the 8th, part of the 7th, and the 2nd Corps fought in a space of 2750 yards.

The command of the 8th Corps was not given back to General von Steinmetz. Since, moreover, the 2nd Army did not exercise this command, but on the contrary returned the 2nd Corps to the command of the 1st Army, the conditions governing command were by no means so clearly and sharply defined as should have been the case. Again, the head-quarters sent no further orders to General von Goeben after those of 2 p.m. on the 17th. Since the position of the 8th Corps was thus entirely unsettled, it is evident that during the whole battle General von Goeben, though in the immediate neighbourhood of the head-quarters and of the commander of the 1st Army,

played an entirely independent part. From the former General von Goeben (8th Corps) received no orders whatever; on the other hand, he received several from the 1st Army (*e.g.* for the attack of the 31st and 32nd Infantry Brigades), but each time only after he had already of his own accord acted exactly in the sense of the order of General von Steinmetz. This unsettled position (which was permitted or neglected) of the 8th Corps was not altogether advantageous; at any rate, the simultaneous crossing of the Mance Valley on the high-road by the 31st Infantry Brigade, the Artillery of the 7th Corps, the 1st Cavalry Division, parts of the 27th Infantry Brigade, and the 9th and 15th Hussars may be attributed to this condition of things, which may thus be considered responsible for some of the later consequences, which might have been avoided, if the sequence of command had been more clearly defined.

The struggle on the heights of Point du Jour presents, with reference to the troops engaged, such a variegated collection of races of men as cannot be found in any other instance in German or Prussian military history. The 8th Corps, being a border force, had left the greater part of its infantry regiments in the Rhine fortresses, and had been made up to strength from other corps districts. The 29th Infantry Brigade consisted of the 33rd Regiment (East Prussian) and the 60th (Brandenburg); the 30th Brigade was composed of the 28th (Rhineland), the 67th (Magdeburg), and the 8th Jägers (Rhineland); the 31st Brigade alone was normal, being composed of the 29th and 69th Regiments (Hunsrück); the 32nd consisted of the 40th Regiment (Rhineland) and the 72nd (Thuringian). Again, the 7th Corps consisted half of Westphalians and half of Hanoverians, the 39th (Lower Rhine) and the 77th (Hanover) being engaged at this point; if we consider also the 2nd Corps, with its Pomeranians and its Poles, we find an extraordinary variety of races in a small space. This is a point to which some attention must be paid, for if anything goes wrong in battle, one is sometimes only too quickly ready to make the troops concerned, and the "unmilitary" races from which they are recruited, answerable for it. Since this has taken place in this instance, I have thought it right to make the foregoing statement. If fate then determined that not one of all the bodies of troops who fought here should carry the attack through, and that few among them should be entirely exempt from panic, we may learn from the fact this lesson, that the best soldiers, under such circumstances as existed here, cannot remedy tactical errors which have been committed; that in such cases all "courage" falls to pieces. It is not a question of a brave heart alone, for such a heart must be guided by a clear head; if this is not the case, brave hearts will result only in heavier loss. The whole of the German troops who were engaged here were fresh in comparison with the French, for only the 39th, 40th, 72nd, and 77th had suffered loss in battle, and their loss was unimportant in comparison with that of the French. All this teaches us how strong, under the then circumstances, a skilfully planned defence was, and we may draw from this the conclusion that it will be very strong in the future under corresponding conditions.

The mixed  
character  
of the  
troops.

Why do I make this statement? 1st, the somewhat resultless attacks on Moscou and Point du Jour are, in the eyes of many, not a very flattering story for the 8th Corps; and even now we may hear it said that the 3rd Corps would have done better, for the reason that the Brandenburgers are better soldiers than the Rhinelanders, that they stick to their work better, and so on. Indeed, during the preparation of this book, this very remark was made to me by an officer of high rank. 2nd, I shall show that an entire corps, the 2nd, though it was fresh, and was pushed in *en masse*, did not really gain a hair's breadth more ground than had already been won by the troops of the 8th Corps, although the enemy could not in the evening possess the same fighting power which he had at midday. 3rd, the numerous attacks of these bodies of troops, of so many races, over open ground, in swarms, lines, and columns, were each and all broken down; yet not one of the bodies of troops which attacked the main French position lost twenty-five per cent. of its strength. This fact might appear to tell very unfavourably against these troops, but such an idea, in my opinion, would be wrong, although we undoubtedly must demand that any good body of troops must be able to endure twenty-five per cent. of loss, without ceasing to attack, and without falling into disorder. If the question be asked, "Why did none of these troops do better?" the blame for this failure must not be laid upon the troops themselves, but upon the tactics for which they were employed. I will go into the latter question later on, and will now only remark that the troops of those days had not yet got rid of a number of elements which might at the beginning of a campaign bring about many disadvantages for all troops, especially when they came upon so strong a position as this was. We ought, therefore, to the utmost of our power to guard against this disadvantage of universal military service. Moreover, strong positions make an impression upon each individual man, and do not, as a rule, increase moral confidence, especially in cases where the assailant can make but small use of his fire. On the whole, it would not be too much to say that, if the infantry which were employed against the position Moscou-Point du Jour had been equipped with sticks instead of with rifles, such an equipment would have been about good enough for the "customary" tactics of that day, for which, according to the latest opinions, no one can be made responsible. And if it be desired to discuss and come to a conclusion on the question, whether attacks over open ground can still be successfully conducted, the events connected with the position Moscou-Point du Jour will afford more matter for consideration than all the other events taken together. At any rate, in this case, no particular race can be made responsible for the perpetual failure; Rhinelanders and Brandenburgers, Saxons and Hanoverians, Westphalians and Lower Rhinelanders, Thuringians and Pomeranians, Poles and East Prussians, they all devoted their strength to the same task, and could not carry it out. If, on the other hand, in one single case an attack was carried through under yet more difficult circumstances, including even actual collision with the enemy (the 38th Brigade at Mars la Tour), this one instance of success can be balanced

by dozens of which the issue was most unfavourable. So long as no information worth having is brought forward with reference to these failures, the question of the attack over open ground cannot be absolutely decided. We should also, before we enter upon discussions and regulations, first exactly examine the occurrences of military history. In that case, we should at least find ourselves in the right way towards the solution of one of the most important tactical questions. But no one takes this way; whether because they are afraid, or because they will not take the trouble, I do not know. It has, anyhow, been but rarely taken up to the present.

At the moment when the first guns of the 9th Corps were fired (about noon), the 26th Infantry Brigade was at Ars; the Corps Artillery of the 7th Corps on the march to Gravelotte, at which place it did not arrive until 2 p.m., while the remainder of the artillery and infantry, with the exception of the advanced detachments in the Bois de Vaux, were assembled at Gravelotte; the 1st Cavalry Division was about Rezonville, the 8th Corps at Villers aux Bois and Rezonville, while the 4th Infantry Brigade, with 2 batteries and a squadron of the 10th Dragoons, was on the march to Vaux. General von Goeben considered the artillery fire of the 9th Corps as the signal for the "simultaneous" attack, and ordered (at 12.15) the 15th Division to advance on Gravelotte, to occupy that place, and to take up a position under cover (?) in the "hollow" (!) to the north of the high-road. From Rezonville to this hollow is about 2400 yards, which it took 30 minutes to traverse. The 15th Division cannot, therefore, have reached this hollow until 12.45 at the earliest, and must have been fired on by the French artillery. Nevertheless, the Official Account says that, "General von Steinmetz, in consequence of what he observed, at 12.30 ordered the artillery of the 7th Corps to advance." General von Zastrow then allowed the batteries of the 14th Division to take up a position between Gravelotte and the Bois des Ognons. It is then said that the fire of these batteries "forestalled the enemy, who were apparently surprised," while only one page earlier it is stated that the 15th Division had already been fired on by the French artillery! The 4 batteries of the 14th Division were reinforced, at 1.25 p.m., by 3 of the 13th Division (the 4th Battery was with the 26th Brigade in Ars), so that at this time there were 7 German batteries in action, giving in this space a number of guns equal to that of the enemy's artillery. Their effect was good, several limbers and ammunition-waggons soon blew up in the neighbourhood of Point du Jour, and after a short time this group of German artillery began to feel that they were superior to that of the enemy. This quick result was specially due to the fact that Major von Eynatten had already, on the 17th, selected this artillery position. He thus knew the range, and could give information to the batteries which came up later, so that they also quickly ranged themselves. This is how a commander of artillery ought to act. If we have begun by giving praise, we must, nevertheless, blame the fact that the reinforcement by the 3 batteries of the 13th Division was not carried out on one flank, but on both, of the artillery of the 14th

Beginning  
of the  
battle of  
Gravelotte.



Division; thus the brigade-division of the 13th Division fought from the first under unfavourable circumstances, since their batteries were divided by those of the 14th Division. After this line of artillery had been formed, General von Steinmetz (at about 1 p.m.) received the order of 12 o'clock, which said that "only such artillery as were needed for the introduction of the coming attack were to be shown." Moreover, the bearer of the order took a good hour to go from Flavigny to Gravelotte, a distance of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles.

Distribu-  
tion of the  
troops of  
the 7th  
Corps  
shortly  
after 1  
p.m., and  
its conse-  
quences.

General von Steinmetz had, in accordance with the spirit of this order, "held back" the infantry, and had placed the whole of the 27th Brigade to the south-west of Gravelotte. Of the 28th Brigade the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 53rd stood at this moment near the 7th Jäger Battalion at the northern edge of the Bois de Vaux, with their front towards the Rozerieulles quarries. The 2nd and Fusilier Battalion of the 13th (25th Infantry Brigade) were, under General von Zastrow, in rear of the above, in order to serve as a support in the wood; the 1st Battalion of the 13th was to the north of the Mance mill; and the 2nd of the 73rd (25th Infantry Brigade) in the mill; to the right of the artillery were the 2nd Battalion of the 77th, and the Fusilier Battalion of the 53rd (28th Infantry Brigade), as well as the 1st and 3rd Battalions of the 73rd (25th Infantry Brigade). The last formed the escort to the guns. This distribution of the troops, which broke up the unity of the divisions, brigades, and regiments without any real necessity, contained in itself the seed of failure, especially considering the difficult nature of the country, and the fact that the error was not remedied. Moreover, the commander of the 13th Division had not exactly distinguished himself by his initiative; but even under more favourable circumstances in this respect the distribution of the troops must of itself have rendered difficult the conduct of command, the direction of the force and every detail of the working. Everything of this kind thus went wrong with this corps throughout the whole day, and it was made powerless by these dispositions. At a later hour the 26th Brigade was directed on Vaux, and the 27th on Point du Jour; but on this flank, throughout the whole day of battle, no attempt was anywhere made to carry out any reasonable or great tactical measure; the troops of the 13th and 14th Divisions continued to be mixed together, while nowhere did the infantry take up a strong fire-position, nor could they, for this reason, make any attack with large and well-ordered forces. The 26th Infantry Brigade certainly fought united, though without any success worth mentioning, against Lapasset's Brigade; but from the time when the 27th Brigade took part in the action the 7th Corps, in this country, extended over not less than 7100 yards! While the disposition of the force of this corps, from the 17th to 5 a.m. on the 18th, was such that it could not properly carry out the task allotted to it by the order of 2 p.m. on the 17th, its commander now deprived himself of all power and means of carrying out the battle order of 10.30 a.m. on the 18th. Thus the 7th Corps discharged none of the duties laid down for it in either order; everything which happened pointed rather to uncertain fumbling, to the want of any distinct ideas,

to the absence of any clear grasp of their task, and to a lack of adequate measures for its execution. If, in spite of this condition, the corps apparently carried out the first part of its task, this was not in any way due to its leader, but because the enemy allowed it to do so; indeed, if the corps had not been there at all, events at this point after the commencement of the battle would have gone on much the same. It is true that the 9th Corps also extended itself over too great a space, but in its case there was an energetic and clear direction of the struggle, while with the 7th Corps everything was uncertain, without energy and without any real aim, and this though at this point it was possible, by observing from the west and the south-west, to make sure, even on the 17th, as to the means which an attack from this direction offered to the leader. That part of the Bois de Vaux which would have served this purpose had been abandoned by the French on the 17th, and the northern border of this wood was in the hands of the above-named battalions of the 28th Brigade. There was, therefore, no obstacle to ample reconnaissance and other preparations, while the road from the Mance mill itself pointed out the proper direction for the attack.

The conditions were far harder for the 8th Corps under Goeben. The strips of wood between the Bois des Génivaux and the Bois de Vaux, as well as the Bois de Génivaux itself, were in the hands of the enemy, and had to be first captured before any steps could be taken for an attack against the position Moscou-Point du Jour. General von Goeben, having probably been called upon by General von Manstein (9th Corps) for support, allowed the batteries of the 15th Division to commence firing at 12.45. General von Goeben had so massed his division in the hollow mentioned above that their right (the 29th Infantry Brigade) rested on the road Gravelotte-Point du Jour; next, on the left, came the 30th Brigade, and then the artillery of the 15th Division, while the 7th Hussars formed the left flank. The whole division was thus not only normally in hand, and drawn up suitably for the battle, but was even set beforehand in the direction in which it would naturally move. If, nevertheless, later on, various difficulties arose in consequence of these suitable dispositions, this was not due to General von Goeben, since he, unlike General von Zastrow, had it not in his power to ward them off by timely and suitable measures, for Goeben had to make himself master of difficult and wooded ground before he could give any consideration to the dispositions necessary for an attack on the enemy's advanced and main positions. The situation opened itself out to Goeben as it were step by step, and he could endeavour to deal with it only step by step. If the troops became afterwards jumbled together, it was simply the orderly and well-directed advance of the division as a closed mass which prevented the occurrence of the same confusion which was to be found with the 7th Corps. Under such circumstances as the 8th Corps had to deal with, it can never be possible to altogether avoid mixing troops together, and this has no special disadvantage, provided that, at any rate, the direction of all the units of the division against one object remains feasible; while, taking all

Distribu-  
tion of the  
troops of  
the 8th  
Corps after  
1 p.m.

things into account, we must acknowledge that, so far as under the very difficult circumstances a whole division could be directed at all, the problem was really solved up to the time of the capture of St. Hubert. Whether, nevertheless, General von Goeben did allow the attack on St. Hubert to take place a little too soon, is a question very difficult to decide. What he did with this object, and in accordance with the time and the circumstances, was entirely in harmony with the spirit of the order for the attack which he received (at 10.30 a.m.), and in no way transgressed von Moltke's order to General von Steinmetz given at noon, even if we leave out of consideration the question as to whether Goeben had any knowledge of this order either from Moltke or from Steinmetz.

The remainder of the 8th Corps was at this time still in the rear.

Value of  
the ground  
in front of  
the posi-  
tion.

We may see how, under such circumstances, it is of great advantage to a defender to occupy the ground in front of a position. As a rule, in the German army we are opposed to the use of so-called "advanced positions," but I am of opinion that this is rather like a judgment on a theoretical scheme, and shows a tendency to reject the good with the bad. Questions of this kind cannot be answered in principle either favourably or the reverse; the surrounding circumstances must be first examined. If we consider the strength of the French main position, the possibility of conducting the struggle from this and from the advanced position at the same time, and the difficulties which the strip of wood must cause to an assailant advancing from that direction, we shall agree that it was certainly right, tactically speaking, that Marshal Leboeuf should advance his troops to the western edge of the Bois des Génivaux, and defend this edge against the assailant in order to oblige him to develop his attack prematurely, and to make a comparatively large display of force, since at a later hour the uniform direction of such a force must entail special difficulties. Marshal Leboeuf could consider and provide for all this before the battle, and by occupying the ground in front of the position, he certainly, under the existing circumstances, did what was entirely right, and caused the assailant no small embarrassment.

Goeben's  
position.

Thickly wooded ground entirely prevents an assailant from knowing whether a battalion, a regiment, or a brigade is extended in front of him. He must himself extend, throw back the enemy, and then again get into order, before he can venture to press on farther, unless he is prepared to find his troops becoming crowded together and in confusion. Goeben's position was such that only by fighting, and by an infantry attack, could he obtain a correct idea of the character of the strip of wood. Of this he could learn nothing whatever by reconnaissances, such as might easily have been carried out by the 7th Corps; he must fight before he could see anything. It was no easy task which lay before him.

Goeben's  
attack.

Moreover, when Goeben became aware of the occupation of the strip of wood by the French, he was compelled to take such measures as might lead to its capture; he could only ask himself whether he was doing this at the right moment and in accordance with the orders which he had received. The decision as to the proper moment for

action depended upon the condition of the battle—while Goeben was expressly called upon to attack—and thus upon the then position of the 16th division and the corps artillery. At the moment when Goeben sent the 15th Division into action, the 16th Division was in the act—in pursuance of his orders—of forming up to the south-west of Gravelotte as a second line to the former. Thus Goeben had done exactly what was right, having one division in action, in good order, and, as far as could be prearranged, well under control, while the other was collected in the rear as a mass, and the corps artillery was ready to take part in the battle; he was thus ready for any contingency. If, however, it be stated that it was intended that the 1st Army should take up a defensive attitude, as the Official Account seems to have had an especial interest in impressing upon us (though it was in opposition to the order of 10.30 a.m. for the battle), we are obliged to ask whether the 8th Corps then belonged to the 1st Army. But whether this be answered in the affirmative or in the negative, the “defensive,” equally with the “offensive,” called for the capture of the strip of wood. In neither case could this be avoided, unless it be held that the defensive meant only the use of artillery. But no tactician in the world could allow this, and Goeben least of all. A strip of wood of this kind cannot be cleared by the fire of artillery, and its capture therefore required that the infantry should attack. In whatever way we consider Goeben’s dispositions, whether from the point of view of the defensive or of the offensive, they were, taking the time and the circumstances into account, correctly thought out, correctly prepared, and, as far as lay within the province of a general in command, correctly carried out.

The 29th Infantry Brigade was specially to advance along the road Gravelotte-Point du Jour, while the 30th moved against the Bois des Génivaux. Thus the former was not ordered to move *on* but *along* the road, and the brigadier might, therefore, allow it to move on one or on both sides of the road. This was also quite right under the circumstances. In this manner, both brigades were further given the direction of their later tasks; since changes of direction of fighting troops cannot be carried out, an extension of the original direction of the march of the 29th Brigade must lead them to Point du Jour, and that of the 30th on Moscou. And so it came about. At the time of making these dispositions, Goeben, from his position, could distinguish both these principal points in the main French position. This position appeared to him extraordinarily strong, and the approach to it very difficult. In front of him was a wood, of which he did not know the character, but which was held by the enemy, while in the centre of the wood there was a deep ravine, and on the farther side a bare hillside, which could not be altogether avoided on either the right or the left; all this forbade Goeben to anticipate any very great success. He was indeed in a somewhat similar situation to that of the 4th Corps at Sadowa. If the 15th Division were expended in the struggle for the advanced position, Goeben could still make use of the 16th in the same direction, and might moreover expect, in accordance with the order for the battle, energetic assistance from

Direction  
of the  
attack of  
the 15th  
Division.



the 7th Corps from the Bois de Vaux; but he might very well be disappointed in this, while he could not take it for granted, or count upon it beforehand.

First joint  
artillery  
fight of the  
7th and 8th  
Corps.

From about 12.45 the artillery of the 15th Division were in action about 740 yards to the west of the road Gravelotte-Malmaison, firing on the enemy's artillery at Moscou; thus the two principal arms came into action at about the same time. In consequence of the conditions which he knew he might expect, and which led him to anticipate a hard struggle, General von Goeben at once called up the corps artillery from Rezonville; these, passing the 16th Division at a trot, hurried forward into the line of guns, and at once opened fire. Thus, at 1 p.m., there were under Colonel von Kameke, 11 batteries of the 7th and 6 of the 8th Corps; in all 102 guns were in action. The thunder of this considerable force of artillery, as heard at that time at the position of the head-quarters at Flavigny, drowned that of all the other guns, while, as we know, Moltke had but a little before (at noon) ordered Steinmetz only to show his artillery under certain contingencies. If, in spite of this, the struggle of the 1st Army had so quickly increased to such an extent, this might have been due to special circumstances which might call for a closer approach of the head-quarters to the line of battle; and, indeed, such special circumstances had arisen. Goeben had committed himself to action, having no knowledge whatever of Moltke's order of 12 o'clock to Steinmetz, while he had in front of him a strong position, which, whether it be considered offensively or defensively, had not been sufficiently attacked by artillery. The artillery fire from Gravelotte was still increasing in severity, and Moltke must have gathered from this that his order of noon had not been carried out. This neglect was due to the unsatisfactory arrangements for command in the 8th Corps and to the force of circumstances. We must observe, in contrast, that the corps artillery of the 7th Corps did not arrive at Gravelotte until that of the 8th had already been under fire for an hour! Such delay was suited neither to the offensive nor to the defensive. The artillery of the 8th Corps took longer than that of the 7th to range itself, which was due to the familiarity with the ground which the latter had acquired before the battle. At a later hour, Lieut.-General Schwarz took over the command of the artillery of both corps, and thus one main condition of good effect was obtained. As a rule, the artillery of the 8th Corps fired on the French positions from Moscou to the main road, and that of the 7th Corps from that point to Rozerieulles; but the range was more than 3300 yards, and did not permit of exact observation of fire, except as regarded Point du Jour and Moscou themselves.

Advance of  
the 29th  
Brigade.  
Capture of  
the wood  
to the south  
of the  
main road.

In order to obtain greater effect, it became necessary to push in the great artillery line to a closer range, which, again, implied a previous advance of the infantry; in consequence of this, the 33rd Regiment occupied Gravelotte, and the 2nd Battalion of the 67th Malmaison; but the remainder of the infantry were still to the west of those two points. Both General von Wedell (29th Brigade) and General von Goeben were aware of this fact, but before the orders of the former



had reached the 33rd Regiment, and those of the latter had reached General von Wedell, the companies of the 3rd Battalion of the 33rd, advancing from the east side of Gravelotte, had captured the opposite border of the wood, with the 12th and 9th companies extended, and the 10th and 11th closed in rear. In the wood they followed the direction of the main road, all four companies being in line with a firing line in front; in this formation they crossed the valley of the Mance, came out on the east side of the wood, and occupied the quarries in their front which lay to the south of the main road. During this movement, General von Wedell ordered the advance of the other two battalions of the 33rd. These both took up the direction towards the south-east, with the 2nd Battalion in the centre and the 1st upon either flank of it, so that the line of advance of these two battalions crossed that of the 3rd, but lay behind its front. Both battalions gained the edge of the wood at their first rush, pushed through the wood up to the bed of the Mance, and there halted to recover their order. From the Mance they later on moved directly upon Point du Jour, opposite to which farm they, at about 2 p.m., issued from the wood. The regiment, therefore, was at 2 p.m. in the following position; namely, from the quarries to the south of the main road as far as a point opposite to Point du Jour, or with about 1100 yards of front. Moreover, the wood had in this direction proved no great obstacle to movement. At the above hour, the 60th Regiment of the 29th Infantry Brigade was at Gravelotte, as the "Divisional Reserve." (?) The following was the state of events at 2 p.m. to the south of the main road; namely, very little resistance had been encountered in the wood, the loss had been small, movement had not been hindered, and on a front of 1100 yards there had been little difficulty in passing through it by companies. The enemy's fire first became destructive as the troops mounted the open slope beyond.

A little later than the advance of the 33rd, General von Strubberg pushed forward the 30th Infantry Brigade to the north of the main road. It consisted of five battalions less one company, and marched through Gravelotte in the following order: the 9th, 10th, and 11th companies of the 67th, the 8th Jägers, the Fusilier, 2nd and 1st Battalions of the 28th. The 2nd Battalion and the 12th company of the 67th had been already sent forward in the direction of Malmaison and Mogador.

Extension  
and first  
advance of  
the 30th  
Infantry  
Brigade.

After passing through Gravelotte, the three companies of the Fusilier Battalion of the 67th remained on or near the main road, the 9th company being in front on both sides of it, with its right in connection with the 33rd Regiment, while the 10th and 11th companies were formed as a half-battalion on the road itself. In rear of them, the 3rd and 4th companies of the 67th followed on the road, in half-section columns, while to the left of the former were the 2nd and 1st companies of the same regiment. The two last-named companies at once captured an advanced corner of the wood, from which the troops in its front had received a certain amount of fire. The quantity of fire which in consequence broke out along the whole front of the strip

Capture of  
the wood  
to the  
north of  
the main  
road.

of wood to the north of the main road put an end to any doubt that the wood was strongly held, and General von Strubberg was thus obliged to first complete the deployment of the brigade. Consequently, the four companies of Jägers moved in one line on the left of the 1st Battalion of the 67th, while on their left were the Fusilier, 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 28th in two lines, of which the first consisted of the 10th, 11th, 6th, 7th, 3rd, and 2nd companies in extended order, with the 12th-9th, 8th-5th, and 4th-1st in half-battalions, the 12th company of the 67th being on the extreme left flank.

After the brigade had taken up this formation, it advanced to the attack of the wood, which (though it was not then known) had its edge strengthened by abatis and breastworks of stone and earth. The attack was successful, and the enemy made no further resistance of importance, but drew back through the wood into his main position. The losses of the assailants were not inconsiderable. At about the same time (2.15 p.m.) as the 33rd reached the eastern edge of the strip of wood, the 30th Infantry Brigade was in possession of the wood to the north of the main road, and reformed itself in the Mance Valley. When the 1st and 2nd companies of the 67th had closed up, they climbed the slope in their front, and pressed forward at a run to the north of the main road for 250 yards in the direction of St. Hubert, finding some cover in the folds of the ground. At that time the 3rd and 4th companies of the 67th stood on the roadway; to their left were the 9th, 10th, and 11th companies, while on *their* left were the 8th Jägers, the Fusilier Battalion, and the 1st Battalion of the 28th. On the other hand, the 2nd Battalion of the 28th and the 12th company of the 67th had turned towards the north, where they formed a flank, just at the spot where the brook which runs from La Folie falls into the Mance. In these positions, the above troops carried on a severe struggle, which at first was directed by the brigadier himself. The front of the 30th Infantry Brigade extended over about 1100 yards.

Arrival of  
the 1st  
Cavalry  
Division  
and of the  
16th  
Division.

While the two brigades thus worked their way through, General von Hartmann had placed the 1st Cavalry Division to the west of Malmaison, and had reinforced with its battery the artillery line of the 8th Corps. There were thus at this point, from about 1.30 p.m., 116 guns in action. Soon after, to the west of Gravelotte, came up first the 32nd, and then the 31st Brigade, so that at 2 p.m. General von Goeben had a fresh division at his disposition; as a provision against a possible retreat on Gravelotte, the 2nd Field Pioneer Company was directed to prepare that village for defence.

Advance of  
the artil-  
lery. Ar-  
rival of the  
corps-  
artillery of  
the 8th  
Corps.

The successful progress of the infantry fight, together with the arrival of the above troops, made a nearer approach of the artillery appear necessary with a view to the possibility of more systematically and effectively firing upon the main position. Even this was not in excess of a defensive action. The advance was not made simultaneously, but in echelons from the left, so that the fire never really ceased. In consequence of this movement, the artillery line of the 8th Corps at 2 p.m. extended from a point to the north of the height 1009 as far as to the south of the main road, having Gravelotte on

its right rear; thus the artillery had, on an average, won about 1100 yards of ground. At about the time of this advance (2 p.m.) of the artillery of the 8th Corps, both brigade divisions of the corps artillery of the 7th Corps had arrived to the south of Gravelotte, but only one battery could find room to form line. When the advance in echelon of the artillery of the 8th Corps was observed, the artillery of the 7th Corps closed up to the south of the main road, in such a manner that they at the same time turned half-left towards the north, with a view to gain more space. In consequence of this, the artillery of both corps were actually in contact with each other to the south of the main road, and at this moment the 2nd H.A. Battery of the corps artillery pushed forward into the line; on the other hand, the two light batteries and the 3rd H.A. Battery of the corps artillery could not yet find room to form line. The number of guns in action was thus increased to 132.

The three batteries named above, together with the Brigade Division of the 16th Division, formed, from 2 p.m., a reserve of 36 guns.

The fire of the 132 German guns proved very effective; Moscou and Point du Jour burst into flames, while the French artillery, which had up to that time only temporarily ceased firing, were now for a period entirely silent, and at 3 p.m. appeared to be no longer able to continue the struggle. The German artillery could therefore select other targets, and now fired on the whole front of the infantry positions, as well as at the advanced post of St. Hubert. Even though their effect upon the French infantry might not be at once evident, yet it was to be presumed that a fire kept up for several hours upon the enemy's shelter-trenches would result in the destruction of the hostile infantry; but to effect this the German artillery must be in a position to keep up an uninterrupted fire. This might, unfortunately, and very probably, not be the case at the critical tactical moment.

While the German artillery, as has been shown, had gained considerable ground, and had silenced the enemy's guns, the 30th Infantry Brigade, which had in the mean time been closed up, had begun their ascent to the east out of the Mance Valley.

Second advance of the 30th Infantry Brigade.

It would appear that the Fusilier and 1st Battalions of the 28th commenced this movement, advancing from the point where the track leading to St. Hubert left the eastern border of the wood. The battalions moved up the open slope in company columns, and made a rush against the height of Moscou, but were both driven back into the wood by the weight of fire. The enemy's fire had broken up all the companies, and only with difficulty was it possible to collect again various small bodies out of the several companies, and with them to hold the eastern edge of the wood, while part of the men, either wounded or fugitives, fled for shelter to the cover of the Mance Valley.

The 28th Regiment driven back.

A similar attempt to the right of this attack had a more fortunate result. We know that, to the north of the main road, the 1st and the 2nd companies of the 67th had fought their way for 250 yards beyond

Capture of the ground in front of St. Hubert.

to the north  
of the main  
road, by  
the 8th  
Jägers, and  
the 67th.

the edge of the wood. To the right of the Fusilier Battalion of the 28th, these two companies, together with all four companies of the 8th Jägers, were pushed on in one line for a long rush over the open ground. They followed the direction towards St. Hubert, which to a certain extent was taken as a point for attack by all the troops fighting in this part of the field. During the rush, the four companies received a severe fire on their left flank from Moscou, but they, nevertheless, continued to advance until they had encompassed St. Hubert on the north-west at a distance of about 200 yards. At this point, all the four companies lay down and opened an effective fire against the farm, which was at the same time continually and successfully kept under fire by the German artillery.

At a time closely corresponding with that of the rush of the Jägers, the 1st and 2nd companies of the 67th climbed the bare slope in small parties, and took up a position on both sides of the main road, but principally to the north of it, also at about 200 yards from St. Hubert. On their left, the three Fusilier companies of the 67th, each of which had one section extended and two closed in rear, had edged in towards them, and thus were in close connection with the right flank of the Jägers. Thus St. Hubert, after the troops had passed by the north of the quarries which lay there, was shut in also on the west. There were here the 1st and 2nd companies of the 67th in the first line and in the open, while between them were clustered three sections of the 3rd and 4th companies of that regiment, the remainder of these companies having thrown themselves into the quarries. While the farm was thus encompassed on the north-west and west, and its garrison were held in check by the combined fire of infantry and artillery, another portion of the 67th, consisting of one section of the 4th and part of the 1st company, turned against that farm from the south of the main road. These detachments succeeded in getting to within 100 yards of St. Hubert. In this critical situation, the 11 companies of the 67th and Jägers steadily persevered in the attack. It is true that the garrison of St. Hubert had already at this time suffered so considerably that their fire caused but little injury to the assailants; but, on the other hand, the latter were under a heavy fire from Moscou and Point du Jour. In fact, the struggle was at its climax, and neither side could endure this state of things for long; it required, in fact, only an impulse to either party to precipitate an immediate decision.

Advance of  
the 29th  
Infantry  
Brigade.  
Capture of  
the gravel-  
pits.

Up to the time of the arrival of the 16th Division, General von Goeben had held back the 2nd Regiment of the 29th Infantry Brigade (the 60th) at Gravelotte. When this division came up (at 2 p.m.), and the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 33rd had captured the point of wood to the south of the quarries of St. Hubert, as well as the gravel-pits which lay, in the direction of Point du Jour, 200 yards in front of the eastern border of the wood, the 33rd Regiment was extended over a front of 1100 yards in two groups each of six companies (the 3rd Battalion and the 3rd and 4th companies being in the quarries of St. Hubert and their neighbourhood, with the 2nd Battalion and the 1st and 2nd companies in the gravel-pits and

their neighbourhood), in such a manner that between the two groups there was an open and unoccupied space of about 750 yards. This disposition for the fight was very unfavourable in front of the strong position of the enemy, but neither the divisional general nor General von Goeben, who was at Gravelotte, could observe it. But information was obtained from the numerous wounded of the 33rd, and also from the fugitives, who were streaming to the rear, that that regiment, in consequence of their long struggle under fire, would soon have lost all its power of offence (which was entirely incorrect); from this, and from the advance of the 30th Brigade against St. Hubert, which Goeben had seen, that general came to the conclusion that the time had now come to give the firing line an impulse towards the capture of St. Hubert by pushing in fresh troops.

For this purpose there were ten companies of the above-named 60th Regiment available. These, at 2 p.m., advanced from Gravelotte for the purpose of strengthening the attack on St. Hubert, and pressed on first as far as the western edge of the wood, where they took up a position to the south of the main road, with the 1st battalion on the right, the Fusilier battalion on the left, and the 6th and 8th companies in the centre. At 2.30 p.m. these companies began to move, with the Fusilier battalion leading, crossed the ravine on the main road, and extended from the left to the south of the road in the following order: the 11th, 10th, and 9th companies, leaving the 12th at the border of the wood. The other companies were following these by the order of the divisional general, when the commander of the regiment rode to meet them, in order to encourage the Fusilier companies, which had been received with a murderous fire; while doing so he was severely wounded, which seriously compromised the unity of all further movement. Nevertheless, between 2.45 and 3 p.m., all the four Fusilier companies had pushed forward into the interval between the two groups of the 33rd.

When the 3rd Battalion and the 3rd and 4th companies of the 33rd saw, from the quarries of St. Hubert, the advance of the 30th Infantry Brigade against that farm, they for the most part closed to the right towards this brigade, and thus shut in St. Hubert on the south.

While the six other companies of the 60th were still engaged in advancing, that is to say, before they reached the firing-line, the detachments which encompassed St. Hubert rose up nearly simultaneously for a joint rush, and pressed forward from various directions against the farm. The garrison did not await the shock. Since there were no entrances on the west side, the troops which crowded towards it from that direction pushed out on to the main road, in order to get into the farm and the garden in company with those which came up from the south. The capture of the farm was without dispute the act of the 8th Jägers, the 1st Battalion of the 67th and the 3rd company of the 60th; for some sections of these troops rushed in first, while the others, namely, the Fusilier Battalion of the 67th, and detachments of the 33rd, 60th, and 28th, followed a little later; but, as far as regards the main portion of the work, it was carried through

Attack of  
the 60th.

Capture of  
the ground  
in front of  
St. Hubert  
to the south  
of the main  
road.

Capture of  
St. Hubert.



by nine weak and almost leaderless companies, who had suffered severely from fire. This fact is of tactical importance. The Official Account says that the troops rose up of "their own impulse." I do not think that this is quite correct. It is certainly true that at this point, with the exception of Major von Bronikowski (8th Jägers), there was no senior officer effective, but the impulse really came from the arrival of the 60th. The arrival of fresh troops from the rear has been shown by experience to be always the best form of impulse in such crises; it communicates its movement to the firing-line, and induces it to make the decisive rush, and this is how, according to information which I have received, this successful attack is to be explained. At about 3 p.m. the six Musketeer companies of the 60th had pushed on either into St. Hubert or on the right of and beyond it towards Point du Jour. But against the latter the troops could gain no advantage in the open ground, and soon after 3 p.m. eighteen companies were assembled in and around St. Hubert, including the quarries; these consisted of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th companies of the 8th Jägers; the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 9th, 10th, and 11th companies of the 67th; the 3rd, 6th, and 8th companies of the 60th; the 3rd, 4th, and 11th companies of the 33rd; and the 1st company of the 28th.

St. Hubert had been garrisoned by the 2nd Battalion of the 80th French regiment.

Distribu-  
tion of  
troops in  
the posi-  
tion.

The course of events had shown that the advance of the 60th had taken place at the right—that is to say, at the ripe—tactical moment. Whether the direction of this advance, from the main road, was the most suitable may seem doubtful; but, under the circumstances, this may well be granted. For at the time when these fresh troops pushed forwards to give their impulse, the garrison of St. Hubert was so closely engaged that they were no longer capable of inflicting great loss upon the 60th. As a matter of fact, the latter did not suffer much loss until later on, and then from Point du Jour. The real question, therefore, was to give the necessary impulse by the shortest way, and that was by the main road; we may therefore admit that the direction was good enough. But was it necessary, in order to give an impulse, to push in all the ten companies? I think not, since under such circumstances as these it is possible that one well-led company, if it comes up in close order, may suffice. But we must take care that there are officers in front, on the flanks and in rear, and each with a drummer near him; then on they go! There is no other way of doing it. If, under such circumstances as existed here, more troops than this are used, it is more difficult to extend, and the odds are 100 to 1 that, from this cause alone, a reaction will set in from the right or the left, which will diminish the force of the impulse. The tactician must strain every nerve to avoid this, since it is a question of a moral, and not of a material, action, of which the conditions remain always the same, whether on the bridge at Arcola or at St. Hubert. As a matter of fact, the troops of the firing-line stormed St. Hubert, and they needed no material, but only a moral, increase of strength to enable them to do so; but experience teaches us that when troops in the firing-line require this kind of support, it must come up from the rear,

and that in such cases small detachments are sufficient, provided only that they are brought up from the rear. They will always give such support as is necessary; if they fail to do so, then let their cockades be torn from their dishonoured heads, and their soldier's tunic be changed for a convict's jacket.

The front line of French shelter-trenches, which was then strongly occupied by infantry, lay in an irregular shape about 250 yards to the north of the garden-wall of St. Hubert. It stood at about the same level as the first floor of the house, and thus commanded all the garden and farmyard, so that a regular occupation of the farm was a matter of some difficulty. Indeed, it was not properly occupied, and it is hard to see how it could have been. Major von Bronikowski, however, looked after the main point, a fire-position with a sufficient number of rifles in action, and for this he employed the stormers in the first line (the 8th Jägers and the 67th), who had not even been re-formed into sections, which, indeed, in such cases is not necessary. It is true that the want of officers was much felt, but the good training of the men went far to make up for it. Of the eighteen companies mentioned above, it would appear that at about 4 p.m. eight were employed in the farm itself, while the other ten were in reserve in rear as far back as the quarry; this was not a suitable use to make of them after shedding so much blood, but no one understood how to arrange for a better one in a fire-position. For further details regarding the occupation of St. Hubert, see chap. v. pp. 174, 175.

At about the time that the above successful attack was carried out, efforts to gain ground were made on both flanks of the 15th Division. For some considerable time St. Hubert had been intuitively recognized as the tactical objective, and it was quite natural that the effect of its capture should be shared by the troops fighting to the right and left of it; on the right, it was again the 60th Regiment which directly made use of this effect, and gave the impulse to attack. The endeavour of the Fusilier battalion, as well as of the six Musketeer companies, to assault Point du Jour was observed by the six companies of the 33rd, which were in the neighbourhood of the gravel-pits. These gallant men rose up at once, with a view to gain at least 250 yards of ground at one rush. It is true that the companies on the left (the 6th and 7th of the 33rd) suffered terrible loss, and were put out of action for the day, for only weak remnants got back to the border of the wood; but the 1st, 2nd, 5th, and 8th companies of the 33rd carried the quarries of Rozerieulles, and held them for a time, while two sections of these companies remained in the gravel-pits. From that point to the north the men of the 2nd Battalion of the 33rd were mixed with those of all ten companies of the 60th lying along the eastern edge of the wood as far as the quarries of St. Hubert. I will later on give more details about the heroic struggle which followed in the quarries of Rozerieulles.

The loud shouts of the four Jäger companies, as they stormed St. Hubert, which had reached to the right as far as the 67th, 33rd, and 60th (Fusiliers), were also heard at Goeben's position, as well as by the extreme left flank of the 15th Division. As we know, the 2nd

Events on the flanks. First storming of the quarries of Rozerieulles.

Attacks on Moscou.

Battalion of the 28th and the 12th company of the 67th were there, in the angle which the Mance forms with the brook which runs from La Folie. The 12th company of the 67th and the 5th of the 28th, on a previous order of General von Strubberg (30th Infantry Brigade), had occupied as a point of support a particularly suitable piece of wall, which tactically had the advantage of protecting their flank. Major Lange now endeavoured, with the 6th and 8th companies of the 28th on his right, and the 7th on his left, to carry out an assault, along the hollow way which ran towards Moscou, against the heights which lay in to his front; but he was driven back. Two further attacks which were made in the same direction with weaker forces were equally repulsed. Major Lange now attempted a fourth against the heights of Moscou, resting his right upon the 1st and Fusilier Battalions of the 28th, but this had no better success; on the other hand, the 1st company of the 28th, with parts of the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th, under Major von Keppelow, pressed into St. Hubert immediately in rear of the 8th Jägers.

Disposition  
of the  
infantry of  
the 7th  
Corps at  
3.30 p.m.

It was now about 3.30 p.m., and we must see what in the mean time had become of the 1st Army, which, according to the order for the battle, was to attack "from Gravelotte and the Bois de Vaux." An order was sent at 3 p.m. to the 26th Infantry Brigade to advance, with a battery and a squadron of the 8th Hussars, from Ars against Vaux and Jussy; at 3.30 p.m. the brigade had not yet received the order, and were consequently still in Ars. The Fusilier Battalion of the 77th (28th Brigade) had, with the corps artillery, come up by Gravelotte, and had taken up their position in rear of the right flank, to the south of that village; to the south of them, again, were the 3rd Battalion of the 73rd (25th Brigade), the 2nd Battalion of the 77th, and the Fusilier Battalion of the 53rd (28th Brigade); the 2nd Battalion of the 73rd (25th Brigade) was in the Mance mill; the 27th Infantry Brigade was on the east of Gravelotte; while to the east of the right flank of the artillery of the 7th Corps were the 1st Battalion of the 77th (28th Brigade) and the 1st Battalion of the 73rd (25th Brigade), and the 2nd and 3rd companies of the 13th were in the valley to the north of the Mance mill. In front of the height 1081, at the northern edge of the Bois de Vaux, were the 7th Jägers, and the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 53rd (28th Brigade), and also the Fusilier Battalion of the 13th (25th Brigade), while the 2nd Battalion of the 13th was in rear. This disposition of the troops is so devoid of any plan, and the units are so broken up, that it would seem that no one knew what it was desired to do. In any case, it was now high time to get the units as much as possible in order, to decide as to what ought to be done, and to arrange suitable preparatory action, and this the more, since the 16th Division was present as a reserve at Gravelotte, and the 2nd Corps was already on the march to that place. What was the good of the infantry of the 7th Corps in this incomprehensible dislocation of units, and, in addition, in rear of the front of another corps?

Omissions  
and con-

General von Steinmetz had an order to attack "from Gravelotte and the Bois de Vaux." The instruction sent at 12 o'clock, to "under

certain circumstances show only his artillery," did not set aside the main idea of the order for the battle, which had been correctly thought out and well worded by Moltke; it merely explained the position which he was to occupy in the then state of the battle; and to a certain extent deferred the action which had been prescribed to a later hour. A battle is constantly varying and changing, and it should have been the task of General von Steinmetz, during the interval since he had received the order of 12 o'clock (which arrived at 1.15 p.m.), to make such preparations for the attack from the Bois de Vaux as might have enabled him to energetically support from that point the struggle of the 15th Division. The fact that nothing of the kind was done was the fault of the commander of the army, and not that of the corps-commander. General von Steinmetz had to give his orders in the spirit of Moltke's order for the battle; the corps-commander had to decide "how" these orders were to be executed. With this object, General von Zastrow should either have himself been on the eastern edge of the wood, opposite to the quarries of Rozerieulles, from 3.30 p.m., or he should have kept some one there to watch the action for him, and to report to him when necessary. If this had been done, even the first capture of that quarry (which took place at that time) would have been known, whereas, since all this was neglected, the officers in supreme command heard nothing whatever of either the first or the second capture of the quarry, or of its final occupation. Indeed, when the fighting troops have been pushed 2000 yards in advance, and there is wooded ground and a ravine between them and their leaders, the latter must arrange for a chain of communication, otherwise all connection will entirely fall through. Of all that should have been done, nothing, absolutely nothing at all, was done, although from 1.15 p.m. to 3.30 p.m., or for more than two hours, the whole of the infantry of the 7th Corps, with the exception of the 26th Infantry Brigade, as well as the five battalions at the northern corner of the Bois de Vaux, were, under the very eyes of Steinmetz and Zastrow, scattered over a space of about 2800 yards. General von Steinmetz, equally with General von Goeben, could see from Gravelotte that the fight of the 15th Division was progressing favourably, and he knew that the 16th Division was standing since 2 p.m. to the west of Gravelotte, in readiness to support the 15th, who were in front of them; he knew, moreover, that the whole of the 2nd Corps was on the march in this direction as a second line; under these circumstances, especially since the fight came to a head around St. Hubert, should he not, two hours before, have organized as far as possible the above-mentioned infantry of the 7th Corps, according to their tactical units (which, given a front of 2800 yards, might have been done by 2.30), have collected them together in the valley at the Mance mill, in order from this point to have closed up to the right to the five battalions at the northern corner of the Bois de Vaux, and then, from this by no means unfavourable point, have seized with the utmost energy the southern corner of the quarry of Rozerieulles, which had already been partially captured. In this case, the battle would have been decided. This southern

fusion of  
mind of  
General  
von  
Steinmetz.



corner was the weakest point of the whole of that portion of the enemy's line which we are considering. It was only about 350 yards from the wood, and three natural lines of approach led to it, all of which might have been noted and laid down; there was no flanking fire to annoy the assailants, and only the minimum of frontal fire. Moreover, the 33rd held their ground in these quarries up to 4 p.m. Even an ensign knows that a salient angle, if it cannot be flanked by the defender, is the weakest point. Did no one, then, think of this? Did no one know that there was such a point? The latter is incredible, since, in the first place, it was shown on the map, and in the second it could be seen from the spot where General von Steinmetz stood. From 2.30 to 3 p.m. General von Steinmetz, if he had understood what Moltke meant, if he had said to himself that the order of 12 o'clock was by circumstances, without any action on his part, entirely set aside, might have assembled 14 battalions of the 7th Corps in the neighbourhood of the Mance mill, and have used them with decisive effect in the direction named above.

This mass of infantry would, at the northern edge of the Bois de Vaux, have been increased to 19 battalions by the addition of the five which were there; he would then have had something in hand, and with it might have pushed through the point which had already with such tactical skill been partially captured by the 33rd. We need not consider whether this would have been successful; at any rate, it would have been the right thing to do, and what was right would certainly have been successful. If dispositions had been made in accordance with the spirit of the order for attack of 10.30 a.m., the quarries of Rozerieulles would not have been lost again; indeed, the battle would have been decided at this point at about 4 p.m. What, then, should have been the relation of the infantry to the great artillery-line in their front? The artillery in this case required no escort; such a line of artillery can protect itself, especially when it has mastered the enemy's guns. If it was desired to push it forward, this was forbidden by the order of 12 o'clock; but it must be remembered that two hours had passed since then, and that orders are not intended to be eternal; if they were, we should want only automata and not generals. But we have generals, in order that they may themselves see and know when they must take upon themselves the responsibility for their own decisions. General von Steinmetz saw distinctly that the 8th Corps had done rather more than merely "show its artillery," while eventually not only was the attack dictated to him, but even the very direction which that attack should take. In consequence of the success of the 8th Corps, he ought to have done what we have here laid down, and to have reported to Flavigny as follows: "The 8th Corps is hotly engaged in front, the 7th will support it from the flank (Bois de Vaux) with all its strength." The situation demanded such action. But no preparation was made, nor was any support afforded to the struggle of the 15th Division which we have described. This was left to take care of itself, and thus the enemy was able to bring almost his whole strength against the one division. If this division had had 19 battalions in



action on its right, who can dispute that in that case it would perhaps have obtained yet greater success in front? Even if they had not done so, certainly the 16th Division would. However, General von Steinmetz, from the beginning to the end of the battle, held fast to the pure frontal attack; he thought only of the exit by the main road, and later on, after such omissions in this respect, made the most inconceivable dispositions to the front, such that, even if he considered himself to be altogether bound by the order of 12 o'clock, are made only the more unintelligible by this fact. In short, Generals von Steinmetz and von Zastrow destroyed here in a few hours the glory of the whole of their great lives. They moved in complete uncertainty; they might have had 19 battalions in hand ready to deal with a moment full of important tactical results, and they had not one. Thus uncertainty is its own punishment; thus is wasted time never to be regained; thus do neglected preparations revenge themselves in the failure of what must otherwise have succeeded. It is impossible to make full use of one's strength; through irritation that which is right is left undone, from uncertainty that which is false is accepted. We may see from this example how very much harmony between the persons concerned must contribute to success, and how discord may confuse the clearest matters, orders or instructions, and may so bring about failure. There was no need here for a genius or for a great master of war; all that was required was a general with sound common sense.

Just as the employment of the infantry of the 7th Corps points to the uncertainty which prevailed on this flank, and, in the same manner as the omissions with regard to this arm, which have been mentioned, bore their own punishment with them, so also was it the case with the artillery. It has already been stated in the description of the ground that the Bois de Vaux was by no means impassable. It had been in our possession since the morning of the 17th, and there had been plenty of time to reconnoitre the wood, and to ascertain whether the German artillery could move in the neighbourhood of the height 1081. In that case it would have been seen that with a little trouble a road practicable for artillery might have been made in the direction of that height, since neither the wood nor the soil prevented it; at any rate, it was easier to make than was that which was cut in darkness on the 13th of October, 1806. Why was nothing done, when fighting had already gone on on this flank, when it was probable that the enemy's position must be energetically attacked, and when this position could be reconnoitred without any great labour or danger? It was merely reasonable to consider that it might become necessary to endeavour to extend German artillery from out of the Bois de Vaux, and that for this purpose a practicable road would be required. In any case, it would be easier to extend artillery from the Bois de Vaux than, as was the case later, at St. Hubert. And if the advance of artillery at St. Hubert was ordered, why was it neglected in front of Rozerieulles? There was finally so much artillery in the front that no one knew how to make use of a great part of it. Had those batteries and guns which it was desired to bring into position at St. Hubert, and which

Passage for  
artillery.

were actually so brought, been sent into action against the French left flank, how different would the effect have been at the latter point, even if that artillery had at this spot met with the same fate, as we shall shortly see experienced by the artillery of St. Hubert. But if the artillery combat had been begun from the Bois de Vaux with better preparation, it is certain that at this point there was no such difficult phase of the combat as that which awaited them at St. Hubert, and which they nevertheless outlived. Moreover, the provision of a good system of communication through the Bois de Vaux would, since the German infantry held its northern border, have been useful, even if only for them.

The staffs.

Generals von Steinmetz, von Zastrow, and von Goeben, with their staffs, were but a few hundred paces from each other. The whole behaviour of the latter was quiet and equable, and his appearance in accordance with his strength. He sat in the saddle with his tall figure bowed forward, with his shoulders a little drawn up, and with his head stretched forward, while through his spectacles showed two wise eyes, which shone at times, when a moment of tension arrived. The officers of the other staffs watched Goeben's actions, as if they felt that this was indeed the man. Hardly a word was spoken; with his glance steadily directed on the enemy, he sat there like a bronze statue, a sure support both in soul and in brains in any severe work. A word quietly spoken to this or that general, or to a staff-officer or an adjutant, a calm nod when he received a report; in this manner and without fuss, he did all that a general could do under the circumstances, with a degree of certainty, of sequence and of quiet that, in spite of the difficult situation of the struggle, gave all around him a feeling of security, which was transmitted, as if by electricity, to every private. We know well that this can be, but we do not know how it comes about! A general can inspire confidence where a fool may be the cause of a panic. I have been assured that Goeben only once turned his eyes to the rear, at the moment of the arrival of the 16th Division, and only once left his place (when the king approached his right flank), up to the moment when he, at a later period, rode over to St. Hubert; in this he judged rightly that in such cases to act thus was the part of a true general.

How different was everything in the two other staffs. When gloomy depression rests upon the face of the leader, when he says nothing, but betrays the conflict in his soul by his gestures and restless behaviour, when he incessantly tugs at and turns his horse, and remains silent for a long time, and, when he does speak, shows the agitation which he suffers inwardly by the sharpness of his voice and accent, there can then be in those around him no quiet and no courtesy, no feeling of confidence or of trust. Proof as he was against the advice of others, Steinmetz was as headstrong as he was vain. There was no harmony between him and his staff, and no cheerful spontaneity; military absolutism weighed like lead on the best dispositions, and prevented all from delighting in their duty. General von Steinmetz was engaged in two struggles: one against the enemy; the other, and that the fiercest, within himself. By reason of the

continual contest within him, thinking that he stood between Scylla and Charybdis, yet perhaps knowing what he ought to do, he actually wasted his strength in himself and against himself, with the result that he did only harm. In this battle he failed to find, at the right time, either the strength or the decision to let orders be simply orders, or to come to a great and good resolve, and then to use all his might to forward it. There was no harmony between him and General von Zastrow, and no agreement with regard to the manner in which the troops were to be employed. There was at no time any feeling of a clear and certain direction of the fight, and, since the leader himself oscillated between utter neglect and the most hopeless decisions, the manner of fighting and the employment of the infantry of the 7th Corps remained without steadiness throughout the day. The leader of this corps simply frittered away his infantry, thus making himself tactically impotent; indeed, it can scarcely happen that any infantry will, in any future action, suffer from such tactical neglect and inefficiency as these did. It was not the fault of the troops; we know that the Westphalians can fight as well as any one, and we know, further, that the men did not fritter themselves away; it was due to faulty tactical leading, and this on that flank which had to play so important a part. If we consider the events of various kinds which had happened to the 7th Corps since midday on the 17th, what, we may ask, would have become of this corps under such a leader, if by any chance they had got into a difficult position? It is simply impossible to guess. General von Steinmetz also failed in giving orders, while the 15th Division were attacking from Gravelotte, for a similar attack from the Bois de Vaux. At 3.30 p.m. his infantry was scattered over a front of about 7000 yards, were broken up into fractions, even in the battalions, and this without any reason why they should be so, and without their having been seriously engaged; and they thus remained until the end of the battle. Under such circumstances, frontal attacks must run their course without any prospect of success, as indeed was the case on this occasion.

The 15th Division was also left to itself up to 3.30 p.m.; it stood like a wedge opposed to the strongest part of the French front, in advance of the whole of the remainder of the line of battle, and about 400 yards from the enemy's main position, exposed to a constant frontal and flank fire. It was broken up into a line of irregular groups, with no fresh support in their rear; their situation showed the value of the powerful line of artillery on the heights of Gravelotte, and much which would otherwise be unintelligible is explicable solely owing to this circumstance; above all, the facts that the enemy, who was superior in numbers at that point, did not rush down from the slopes above, and that St. Hubert could be occupied, to say nothing of its capture. All these found their cause in the great tactical superiority of the German artillery. Up to 3.30 p.m. the 15th Division fought with about 10,000 rifles against about 16,000 of the French 2nd and 3rd Corps, but it was supported by 156 guns against 90 of the French; it had by that time suffered its principal loss, and may have counted about 8000 rifles. Of these at least 25 per cent.

The 15th  
Division  
after 3 p.m.

were scattered in the woods which lay behind the front, and there were thus at first about 6000 rifles of the troops in the front line; these had been thinned by fire, and were covering a line of fully 2200 yards. Their positions were as follows: in the quarries of Rozerieulles, in the gravel-pits and their neighbourhood—the 1st and 2nd companies and the 2nd Battalion of the 33rd, and on their left the Fusilier Battalion of the 60th, with the 1st, 2nd, and 4th companies of the same regiment close to them; in St. Hubert were 18 companies of the 8th Jägers, and of the 28th, 67th, 60th, and 33rd, with part of the 3rd Battalion of the 33rd in their rear; to the north of the main road were the mass of the 28th Regiment and the 12th company of the 67th. Moreover, up to 3.30 p.m., it had not been found possible to establish a connected fire-position, from which the main position might be attacked later on; but the troops remained, in the above-named groups (some of which were far away from the others, while all were weak on the flanks), in the same condition in which they happened to find themselves. But if they should fail to take up a fire-position, from which the infantry could fully prepare the attack, then any attack must be without prospect of success, especially if no strong co-operation were ordered to take place from the Bois de Vaux. Both of these conditions actually obtained; no fire-position was arranged, and no attack was made from the Bois de Vaux, and while finally every effort was directed towards carrying out an attack against the front, without preparation and on the worst possible plan.

General von Goeben was not indeed at 3.30 p.m. fully aware of the real condition of the 15th Division, but his judgment, nevertheless, told him that it must have nearly exhausted its spirit of offence. The strip of wood in rear of their front was crowded with fugitives from all the troops engaged; there was there a motley crowd of white, red, and blue shoulder-straps, and of men with and without arms, in helmets, in forage-caps, and even without any covering on their heads. But there were no officers, except the few which lay there wounded. The senior officers certainly collected together all the men who were in the valley, but this was only the minority, since the majority kept themselves carefully concealed outside of the bottom of the valley. Such detachments as could be collected were sent forward again to the fighting-line; but, since they were almost altogether without officers, and even without non-commissioned officers, very few of them ever arrived at it. Practically the strip of wood remained filled with a large number of fugitives up to the morning of the 19th of August, and no exception can be made of any particular body of troops, or of any special province, for the seductive shelter of the wood claimed some tribute of human frailty from all. From this fact we may learn the lesson that under such circumstances the post for officers is in rear of the front line. The wounded from among the fighting troops for the most part turned towards the main road, which thus from noon until late in the night served as a drain for the wounded and unwounded of all units of troops. Most of these fellows seemed in good spirits, almost all appeared certain of success, and up to the evening there was rarely any look of real defeat about them.

The attack of the 15th Division had at once called up into their position the two corps of the enemy which stood opposite to them, and from the time that the Germans showed themselves to the east of the Mance Valley an unbroken fire of skirmishers was kept up from the French line of fire which we have described. By 3.30 p.m. the French had no longer any large reserves of infantry available; the 3rd Corps had already by that hour exhausted its infantry, but the 2nd had still one fresh regiment at its disposal. This condition of things, which could not then be known, was really a great and general success. The French artillery had retired their guns for a time, and had left the German artillery fire unanswered; this did not look as if the French had any superabundance of strength. Real counter-attacks, with the exception of some from the neighbourhood of Leipzig and Moscou, had not up to this time been undertaken, while those which were made, though energetic, were but in small force. All these circumstances must have shown the Germans that the entire force of the French was fettered to the heights which lay to the front, that they were all drawn into the fire-fight, and that there was no longer any chance of a counter-attack in force. If this opinion were correct, the Germans might hope that an attack carried out according to a settled plan against the front and flanks of the main position might succeed. Such an attack ought, therefore, to have been thought of after 3.30 p.m. It was thought of—not on any plan, but without system altogether, and an unfavourable time and unpropitious conditions were chosen for it.

As far as concerned the arrival of the 29th and 30th Brigades of Infantry, their leading and behaviour was generally suitable. Of the 29th Brigade only the 33rd came into action. It first captured the wood, and then re-formed its ranks in the Mance Valley with a view to pushing on up the slope. The leader of this brigade kept up at first a close communication by means of reports with the officers in higher command, and the 30th Brigade did the same to the north of the main road. The tactical advantage which was obtained up to the time when they began to mount the open slopes to the east, was due entirely to the excellence of the leading from the brigadiers downwards, and to the co-operation of the two brigades against St. Hubert. The issue of the 2nd Battalion of the 28th to the north was, under the circumstances which prevailed, a great tactical advantage, whether it was so intended or not. Since but for the thorough cover afforded to the flank by this battalion, by repeatedly assuming the offensive in strength, it would have been at least doubtful if the infantry could have persevered in their advance up the eastern slope, in which case the artillery of the 8th Corps might have run some risk. If Marshal Leboeuf had wished to really threaten the Germans on this slope, he ought to have energetically attacked the fork of the valley from Leipzig; but he did not know where to find sufficient force for such an attack, and the repeated counter-attacks of the French, being made in insufficient force, failed; they disturbed and distracted the attention of the Germans who occupied this (for an attack against Moscou-Point du Jour) most important point, but they

The French  
at 3.30 p.m.

The  
method of  
leading of  
the German  
brigades.



in no way jeopardized the bold advance of the 15th Division. Even at a later hour the marshal could not collect any force with which to make use of the advantages which offered themselves to him from this direction; but the Germans could not know this. If, therefore, the Germans proposed later on to press forward with an energetic attack against Moscou-Point du Jour, it was necessary that they should throw out beforehand an ample force to hold the fork of the valley and its neighbourhood. General von Strubberg, who came up to the spot, correctly recognized this fact, and neglected nothing to direct attention to it. This fact must also be kept well in mind when considering the conduct of the fight at a later hour. The troops in general committed the error of crowding directly forward to the spot where before there had been only loose lines of skirmishers, that is to say, towards the exit of the main road in front of St. Hubert. This can never be entirely avoided in attacks which converge, but every effort must be made to diminish the evil. To some extent all went wrong; in the wood the men broke up their formation too soon and too much; thus they advanced from it still too scattered, and then crowded themselves together at the very moment when they ought to have been dispersed. But we must here remark that the position of St. Hubert naturally induced the mistake. Taking it altogether, however, it was no easy tactical task to smoothly carry through an attack with two brigades fighting side by side, to then push them through thickly wooded ground, to collect them anew into their units, and then to work them against St. Hubert so well, that really it was scarcely possible to do it better; for the main force of both brigades, which had been engaged from the beginning, was brought directly to bear upon that object for the attack which was later on pointed out to them by the situation, though not by the orders which they received.

The  
method of  
leading of  
the smaller  
units.

On the whole, the attacks were generally carried through by companies, which knew how to work together in spite of the difficult conditions from which they suffered. At the same time, the behaviour of the four Jäger companies is full of instruction, and was most successful; they kept up their fighting strength, which is so necessary for an energetic offensive, although they were in a long line of skirmishers without any reserve; they rose up first for the storming of St. Hubert, after they had kept up an effective fire on the farm, and they held their ground in the farm itself until nightfall. Their loss was not small (12 officers and 197 men), and their manner of fighting seems to me to have been nearly ideal. I own that with such excellent material (Jägers and Rhinelanders too), it is easier to carry on than with the ordinary average of men, but, nevertheless, example has a real tactical value. There is yet another point which is worthy of notice—the 15th Division was formed provisionally from various units, but no tactical difficulty arose from this fact; on the contrary, the system of command worked remarkably smoothly. The Fusilier and the 1st Battalion of the 28th seem to have had the smallest part in the main success, but circumstances were unfavourable to them; at any rate, their loss was not heavy (22 officers and

341 men), and it is not easy to avoid the impression that the loosening influence of the wood upon the leading and the cohesion of the units was particularly disadvantageous to them; but, on the other hand, the loss of the 67th, which distinctly suffered from most unfavourable conditions, was not heavy, being 29 officers and 344 men.

It would have been better if the rush of the troops (the 60th and 28th), after the capture of St. Hubert, had not taken place. Individual companies could do nothing against the main position; indeed, nothing whatever was possible without a previous systematic preparation, and there had been none of this—thus the problem still awaited its solution. Individual companies (of the 33rd and the 60th) certainly succeeded in getting to within what was then the normal range (200 yards) from the main position, but there the enemy's power of fire was far superior to theirs, so that they had to turn back again, and could not make a stand until they arrived again at the eastern edge of the wood. Reaction of this kind is positively invited by such advance under superior fire, and experience shows us that troops melt away under it, and lose too much of their tactical value. Such combats of companies on their own account must be avoided, especially when there is no distinct object in front to be attacked, as was the case here. Fortunately the enemy up to this moment was content to drive them off with fire; if, as he did at a later hour, he had himself passed to the attack at the right moment, a panic would, as ever, have been the result of such tactics, and the troops would have been as good as lost; and this not so much on account of their material loss as owing to the bad moral effect of a counter-attack by the enemy, if made at such a moment. Mitigating circumstances can be pleaded in excuse of the rush to the front by companies which took place up to 3.30 p.m.; the same cannot, however, be said of the later period of the action, during which, even until night, the same mistakes which had been made from midday, were continued to an ever-increasing extent. Rhinelanders, Prussians, Brandenburgers, Magdeburgers, Thuringians, Pomeranians, and Poles, working, so to speak, as an army on a small space, and trying to do that which they had so often failed to do, show us how bad were our tactics of that day, not with reference to the special bodies of troops, but with regard to the army as a whole. This example has much in common, in the succession and in the character of the mistakes, with the successive attacks of the Prussians on the French at Jena, and showed just the same obsolete tactics. We used mainly shock tactics without any sufficient preparation; indeed, even without any preparation at all, for we never took up an effective fire-position with the infantry. Shock tactics should not have been employed until after systematic fire tactics had held sway; but we had then no sufficient knowledge of the power of fire of the enemy's rifle.

*B. From the Capture of St. Hubert to 5 p.m.*

General von Goeben, at about 3 p.m., became convinced of the necessity of reinforcing the 15th Division, which was then in action, <sup>Goeben's idea at 3 p.m.</sup>

in the direction of Moscou. Judging from his position at the time, and considering the circumstances, he could not well come to any other conclusion. He consequently ordered the artillery of the 16th Division and one of the brigades which still remained at his disposition to come into action. Both of these decisions were correct, considering the time and the circumstances. But if General von Goeben was of the opinion that (at 3 p.m.) a reinforcement was required by the 15th Division, which was somewhat pressed, or, in other words, if he thought that without such an access of strength this division would no longer have been able to meet a counter-attack by the enemy (and he could not know that the French had no reserves available for this purpose), how was it that the Generals von Steinmetz and von Zastrow, whose position was quite near to his, had even before this hour come to the conclusion that the enemy was overcome, and was even ready to abandon his fire-positions?

The feeling  
in the  
artillery  
position of  
the 7th  
Corps.

What special symptoms were there of such a thing? 1. General von Goeben had, at 2.15, informed Steinmetz of the successful progress of the struggle of the 15th Division; this was before the capture of St. Hubert. But this could have raised no special hopes in Steinmetz, even omitting the fact that Steinmetz must have known, from his own observation, the contents of this report, and, as a matter of fact, did know them. 2. Soon after 2.15 p.m. General von Wedell had sent a report, from the south of the main road, that a turning movement round the enemy's left flank would result in the capture of the heights which the French held. General von Goeben's report was correct, and General von Wedell's proposal was so exactly adapted to the circumstances, and so distinctly demanded from General von Steinmetz the occupation of a suitable preparatory position and the bringing up of a mass of troops—which, considering the time and the conditions, might perfectly have been carried out—that from this time forward the conduct of General von Steinmetz becomes a complete riddle.

I must here refer the reader to what has been said with regard to the distribution of the infantry of the 7th Corps at the time (2.30 p.m.) of the receipt of General von Wedell's report by Steinmetz. Even if General von Steinmetz had not of his own accord come to the conclusion at this moment that the mass of troops could and must be pushed forward from the Mance mill against the Rozerieulles quarries, he could not, after the receipt of General von Wedell's report, be any longer doubtful as to what he ought to do. This general had distinctly laid the idea at the feet of Steinmetz; indeed, he had thought for him, and all that the latter had to do was to see what was put before him, and to be willing to do it; in which case he could not go wrong, tactically speaking. The preparatory position of the whole of the above-mentioned infantry of the 7th Corps might have been occupied in the spirit of Wedell's report, and they might, in accordance with it, have been already set in motion in the direction named by him at 3 p.m. General von Steinmetz did nothing of the kind, nor did he think of any useful measures. 3. Half an hour later, in the long and constant advance of the battle, St. Hubert fell.

From the general's position could be plainly seen the retreat of the former French garrison, while the enemy's artillery, and even his infantry, ceased to fire. But soon afterwards, when the defenders of St. Hubert had cleared the front, the latter fire reopened along the whole line, but only as a slow fire of skirmishers. Different movements of columns and lines close in rear of the crest of the heights by Point du Jour were, as I have been informed by trustworthy witnesses, clearly to be seen with glasses from the line of the artillery of the 7th Corps. Moreover, life and movement could be distinctly observed in the shelter-trenches, etc., of the main position, while nowhere was there any sign of their abandonment. In the artillery line of the 7th Corps the opinion was that the enemy's infantry was reorganizing in the shelter-trenches, and that, in the anticipation that an attack on the main position would follow the capture of St. Hubert, the reserves had been pushed in closer to the crest of the heights. This was at the moment the universal impression produced upon the artillery officers of the 7th Corps who were engaged in the observation of the fire. This impression was correct, as was evident later on.

Whilst these officers considered that the enemy were now first preparing themselves for some great and final action, and that they had principally on this account allowed a pause to take place in their fire, General von Steinmetz and General von Zastrow found yet a third opinion, namely, that the enemy was retiring and abandoning the shelter-trenches. It is not proposed to enter into the question here, but there were various opinions, and the senior officer had the right to decide, and also the responsibility for the decision. If this was the real view of the two generals, how was it that at 3 p.m. they had forgotten the hint of General von Wedell? This no one can answer. Both generals belonged to that description of men who do not like forward inferiors to interfere with anything; moreover, since 1866, General von Steinmetz had regarded himself as infallible. It was, therefore, scarcely worth while for any one to have an opinion, since throughout the zone of command of General von Steinmetz there was allowed to be but one opinion, his own. Such a general of necessity produced on the people around him the effect of a nightmare, while to Moltke he seemed a surly army leader, troublesome, difficult to manage, and a hindrance; and so he was indeed!

General von Steinmetz, in spite of Moltke and Wedell, allowed the enemy's left flank to remain their left flank; he saw the enemy running away, whilst he was in fact preparing for action; and when the bull was ready for the charge, he rushed in from the front upon his horns.

To return to Goeben. In accordance with his orders, the batteries of the 16th Division were, at 3 p.m., brought into action immediately to the north of the main road, so that from that hour 156 guns in one line were playing upon the enemy's main position. Simultaneously, the 31st Infantry Brigade (29th and 69th Regiments), under General Count Gneisenau, commenced to move from their first position between

Impression  
of General  
von  
Steinmetz.

Goeben's  
disposi-  
tions at  
3 p.m.

Mogador and Gravelotte. The 29th Regiment was on the right, with the 1st Fusilier and the 2nd Battalions, in the above order, in rear of each other on the main road, to the north of which were the 69th in line of company columns, and a little to the front; the battalions from right to left were the 1st, 2nd, and Fusilier, the 2nd being at first a little in rear of the others. Before the brigade commenced to move, it was called upon to support the 30th in the direction of the fork of the valley towards La Folie. The Fusilier Battalion of the 69th at once turned in that direction from Mogador, and was shortly afterwards followed by the 7th and 8th Companies of the same regiment. Thus at least a quarter of the brigade moved at once in a direction which was not that originally desired by Goeben; but the fork of the valley was so important a point, and its possession was so indispensable to any attempt on the front which the troops in that part of the field, who belonged to the 15th Division, had so strongly carried through, that this branching off must be approved. There therefore now remained only eighteen fresh companies disposable on the front Moscou-Point du Jour, which was held most weakly to the north of the main road (by the 1st and Fusilier Battalions of the 28th); but this force was ample for a reinforcement. It is not known whether General von Goeben reported these measures to General von Steinmetz. Even if he did not do so, which was certainly possible, the advance of the 31st Brigade was visible from the position of General von Steinmetz. He must, therefore, have known that the main road was occupied by infantry, and that the 29th Regiment, before 3.30 p.m., had not been able to make its way through the passage.

Disposi-  
tions of  
General  
von  
Steinmetz.

Whilst Goeben had issued his instructions with the above intentions, and the measures which he had taken were being carried out, General von Steinmetz, at 3 p.m., gave orders, not for an attack, but for a pursuit. Observe this! Goeben gathered from what had taken place, that a reinforcement was necessary; from the same circumstances Generals von Steinmetz and von Zastrow, who were standing close to him, judged that a pursuit was required. Experts may thus look at the same things from totally different points of view! Steinmetz and Zastrow seem thus to have wished to outbid each other, so that neither should outdo the action of the other, or should snatch from the other the palm of victory on the walls of Metz. At least, this is the only way in which to explain what happened.

Again, how unsuitable were the dispositions which they made for their "chase"! General von Steinmetz, at 3 p.m., sent the following order to the 1st Cavalry Division, which was then to the west of Malmaison:—

"The 1st Cavalry Division will advance at once across the defile of Gravelotte; the regiment of the advanced guard, supported by the fire of the batteries of the 7th Corps, which will advance with the division, will wheel to the left in rear of St. Hubert in the direction of Moscou farm, and will charge the enemy, who is inclined to give way; it will



carry on this charge up to the glacis of Metz. The remainder will follow this regiment."

In the second place, the 26th Infantry Brigade, which was in Ars, was to advance thence towards Vaux. This was the combination arranged by General von Steinmetz for a frontal and flank attack, or for whatever else we may like to call it.

If the enemy were giving way, it was necessary that the cavalry should trot, otherwise there was no prospect of reaching the foe, before he had taken up a fresh position. The commander of the 1st Cavalry Division rightly understood the order in this sense, and the division at once trotted off. It might now have been reckoned that at a trot they would reach St. Hubert in seven or eight minutes, and that probably word would have to be passed to the columns of the 29th, at the point where the main road rose 20 feet above the Mance Valley, to hold their fire, since at this point neither of the arms could take ground to the right or left. It does not require much imagination to conceive the consequences, supposing General von Steinmetz to be wrong, and that the enemy was not giving way.

Again, from Gravelotte to Ars is more than  $4\frac{1}{4}$  miles; the order, therefore, which was sent from Gravelotte at 3 p.m. could scarcely reach the 26th Infantry Brigade before 3.45 p.m. The brigade would then have to march from Ars to Vaux,  $1\frac{1}{4}$  miles, while it was the same distance from Vaux to the enemy's flank; it was thus hopeless to expect the attack on the enemy's flank to take place before 4.30 p.m. But if the enemy was giving way, what would be the use of the arrival of the brigade at that hour on the field of battle? They would have found no foe there to attack! What happened here was the last thing that Moltke desired. General von Steinmetz could not see the wood for the trees. The 26th Infantry Brigade could certainly have advanced in the direction named, but they might with equal right—in accordance with the order for the battle—have been called up at 1 p.m. as at 3 p.m., for no new reason for the movement had arisen in the mean time; but it ought to have been arranged that at 3 p.m. fourteen battalions of the 7th Corps, which were around Gravelotte, etc., should be in movement from the Mance mill against the quarries of Rozerieulles.

The cup of misfortune now first began to overflow; at the same time as the above order of General von Steinmetz, General von Zastrow directed the whole of the artillery of the 7th Corps "to take up a position on the farther slopes to the south of the main road to Metz;" while, as their escort, "the 27th Infantry Brigade will be pushed forward as far as the western border of the wood." The commander of the artillery of the 7th Corps, when he received the order, could not believe his eyes or ears. Foreseeing the inevitable catastrophe, and conscious of his responsibility, he took refuge in a stratagem. While apparently instructing the officers who were under him in the sense of the order which he had received, he directed the officers carrying this order to ride along the line, and to whisper it to the field-officers in turn; but he added to it: "You must manage to make something to do, as if you were not able at once to limber up, in order to gain

Disposi-  
tions of  
General  
von  
Zastrow.

a couple of minutes. This couple of minutes may save us. Delay a little before you do anything." As a matter of fact, this stratagem did save many of them, but not all!

The catastrophe.

As has been before mentioned, the 3rd and 4th, and the 3rd H.A. batteries of the 7th Corps could not find space to come into line. These three batteries were, therefore, ready to advance. Although the commander sent the order to them last of all, no further loss of time was possible in their case, and the three batteries at once began to move, while, since all this had happened before the 1st Cavalry Division received the order, the artillery, owing to the short distance between them and the main road, found themselves at the head of the column. Let us now think how matters stood. 1. The eastern exit of the main road had been obstructed by a wire entanglement; the infantry who had already passed had cut through this, but not across the whole width, so that the obstacle still existed to some extent. 2. Though St. Hubert had been stormed, and though the 60th and the 33rd had directed their furious charges against Point du Jour, these had brought about a second obstacle, since hundreds of wounded extended, like a huge snake, along the main road, and there were even more fugitives and others who were helping the wounded. 3. Towards these the above-named 29th Regiment was advancing, and way had to be made for it as far as possible. 4. This infantry did not as yet know that masses of cavalry and artillery were to follow it. 5. The mass of cavalry had no idea that they would find infantry and artillery masses in front of them, and in a defile under the enemy's fire. 6. None of the three knew that they would meet flocks of men coming out of action. 7. On the other hand, all three were in hot haste. The infantry were marching in sections, the artillery in column of route, and the cavalry at first in sections. The cavalry and the artillery, at a trot, caught up the infantry before they had got through the wood, and then the following sight was to be seen: In front were the 3rd light and the 3rd H.A. batteries, and in rear of them the 4th Ulan Regiment, with the 4th light and the 4th heavy batteries beside them. In this massed formation the long column pressed forwards.

What an extraordinary sight; and what an extraordinary system of leading! There was only one road, and that was under the fire of the enemy; upon this one road, at the same time, were crowded, from five separate units of command, an infantry regiment (the 29th), while beside it were two others (the 39th and the 74th), a cavalry division with its battery, and four other batteries, and in addition the 9th and 15th Hussars (the former from the 8th and the latter from the 7th Corps), who had not even been placed under one command; and these masses had no previous understanding with each other, nor had any order of advance been laid down, so that they were left entirely to themselves to wind through the narrow road as they best could. The 31st Brigade was sent as a reinforcement, the 1st Cavalry Division was to pursue a beaten enemy, the 27th Brigade was to act as a reserve to the movement, and the batteries were to support the attack! Here was a hideous scene of confusion in all and each, in

the system of leading, in the importance and the duties of the various arms, in the grasp of the tactical conditions, and in the estimate of the events which had gone before. How could such a beginning have a good end, even under more favourable circumstances? The soldier's art consists of order, simplicity, and clearness, and in holding to these three with inflexible firmness. But there was nothing here of the kind. Picture to yourself a continuous wall of smoke, out of which the flames of Point du Jour and Moscou rose up to heaven, 144 guns in action (at that very moment) in rear of the valley, with the headquarters coming up in rear of them, while in front were masses of infantry, cavalry, and artillery crowding into the ravine, some of them pressing on to the front, others falling back under the pressure of the enemy's fire as the range got shorter, wounded and unwounded men, infantry in order and in disorder streaming in opposite directions and jumbled together, the echo of the shell as they burst in the wood or above the trees, the whistling of the bullets from either side as they rushed overhead, and over the whole a column of dust which darkened the sun; you will then understand that every one who took part in the struggle felt himself tremble as he wondered what would be the end of all this. But anything which men undertake with doubt in their hearts must fail, and nothing could save this from soon ending in a catastrophe.

The order which was given to the 1st Cavalry Division has become famous in military history. A simple glance at the map must have told General von Steinmetz that, granting his suppositions to be correct, the charge must have come to an end at the valley of Châtel, and not on the glaciis of Metz. But it was well known that Steinmetz demanded "deeds," and that only the extraordinary had any charm for him. A charge over 2200 yards is no great "deed;" but it was nearly four miles to Metz through country in which, as a rule, there was not space sufficient for one squadron to charge. "Energy" may sometimes turn to madness!

The masses of cavalry, artillery, and infantry, who were thus crowding on to the main road between 3.15 and 3.30 p.m., at this moment attracted almost exclusively the attention of both friend and foe. Since the artillery and the cavalry were moving at a trot, the latter, who were at first in column of sections, had to break into threes on the road; then began to rise the huge, thick, white clouds of dust which showed the waiting enemy that something extraordinary was in preparation. The dust on the road soon became so thick that the troops in the column could rarely see each other, and could at most only feel and hear. Moreover, there was the uncomfortable feeling that, as they descended into the valley, the artillery fire ceased almost altogether, while the infantry fire was only moderately kept up. At the head of the column, as has been stated, were the 3rd and 4th Light, the 3rd H.A., and the 4th Heavy batteries, while the batteries of the 14th Division had fortunately wasted so much time that there was an interval between them and the others. Whilst the first-named batteries trotted past the 29th, the 1st Cavalry Division at the same moment pushed forward at a trot. The artillery

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cavalry

of the 14th Division consequently remained halted, but limbered up, to the south of the main road, in order to allow the 1st Cavalry Division to pass, proposing to follow in their turn. Their fire was thus altogether lost, since they were for a considerable time merely spectators. The 1st Cavalry Division was moving in the following order: The 1st Cavalry Brigade, leading, with the 4th Ulans in front, then the 2nd Cuirassiers, and then the 9th Ulans with a H.A. battery; the 2nd Cavalry Brigade had the 8th Ulans in front, then the 3rd Cuirassiers, and then the 12th Ulans. The change from column of sections to column of threes caused such an interruption that the rear brigade had first to halt, and then to move at a walk. In the mean time, the 9th and 15th Hussars shot by from the right, also in threes, and got up beside the 2nd and 3rd Cuirassiers. There was a good deal of hustling among the thirty-two squadrons who were wedged together, and the tail of the division had to halt again. It may be added in anticipation, that in the mean time the leading batteries had formed line near St. Hubert; suddenly two ammunition-waggons, belonging to these batteries, rushed from St. Hubert, with their horses mad with terror, back into the narrow neck of road. The crowding and the stoppage now became intolerable; the road was absolutely blocked, and for some minutes no one could move backwards or forwards; the whole mass had, in fact, made itself defenceless. When at this moment the 4th Ulan Regiment, which was leading, endeavoured to deploy, the concentrated fire of the enemy's artillery and infantry was suddenly poured in on the unlucky troops. The crowding, the pushing, the hustling and the noise increased to a terrible extent, every one felt the helplessness of the position, and the approach of a catastrophe; then "Threes about" was sounded from the rear at the moment when the tail of the 1st Cavalry Division had reached the road to the east of Gravelotte. The intense strain lasted for half an hour, and at 4.30 p.m. the 1st Cavalry Division, with the exception of the 4th Ulans, was again halted at Malmaison. General von Hartmann, the commander of this division, had in the mean time perceived that the order given to him could not be executed.

Even though General von Steinmetz must bear the main blame for this occurrence, yet General von Hartmann cannot be entirely absolved from a share in his fault. The order which was received from General von Steinmetz was so distinct that it entirely excluded any doubt as to the correctness of his judgment of the state of the action. Nevertheless, General von Hartmann, from his position near Malmaison, could perfectly well distinguish all that the enemy were doing, and he ought by no means to have set his division in motion, until he himself had ridden across the Mance Ravine, and had convinced himself as to the possibility of carrying out the order which he had received. The general omitted to do this, and his neglect consummated the evil.

2. The  
artillery  
of the 14th  
Division.

When the tail of the cavalry division began to be hampered, the artillery of the 14th Division saw that it was no longer of any use for them to think of crossing the valley, and they therefore turned back into their old position, and resumed their fire from it. Thus,



after they had remained out of action for half an hour, they had to range themselves again; but if everything had happened exactly as was intended, no gun should have left its position or interrupted its fire, for the enemy's artillery and infantry should have been restrained with all possible energy. The fact that both of these arms were able to open suddenly an overwhelming fire was especially due to a great part of our artillery (that of the 14th Division) having ceased to fire, while that of the 13th Division were preparing to limber up, and thus fired only an occasional shot. Thus the fire of the whole of the artillery of the 7th Corps fell off, to a certain extent, at the decisive moment, while the Germans themselves abandoned all the advantage which they had gained up to that time; and the error could never afterwards be remedied.

The commander of the corps-artillery of the 7th Corps, Colonel von Helden-Sarnowski, was, together with General von Zimmermann, at the head of the first batteries which crossed, with the object of choosing near St. Hubert a suitable position for the four batteries named above. But, since the batteries followed at a trot immediately after these officers, there was no time for the commander to make sure on the ground whether it was possible for artillery to hold its own near that farm. This was no reproach to the commander; if the batteries had not been so hastily pushed forward, it might have been possible—and it certainly would have been under other conditions—to have sent them back in time. When Colonel von Helden-Sarnowski arrived near St. Hubert, he felt that the four batteries had been betrayed into a terrible situation. Nevertheless, he exerted himself to find a suitable position for them, in which he was assisted as much as possible by the battery leaders. But so far as the colonel could see, the position of St. Hubert was thoroughly bad; the only cover towards the enemy, whose front was at a higher level, was that furnished by the garden wall, which was only knee-high. If a position were taken up in rear of our front, and facing Moscou, the right flank was exposed to the enemy's infantry at Point du Jour at a range of from 300 to 400 yards; if a position were taken up facing the latter place, then the left flank was exposed to the enemy's infantry fire. It might have been possible, perhaps, to extend to the right and left of the farm, fronting towards Moscou and Point du Jour, but artillery is composed of horses, men, and guns, and experience shows that under infantry fire the falling horses, etc., spoil the best intentions. In such a case, it is impossible to do what we wish, we can only do what we can. One has to stay at whatever point circumstances will allow us to reach, and fire away as hard as we can; as a rule, the guns were able to get as far as the south of St. Hubert. From that point it was certainly possible to give an effective fire on Moscou, and this was done with such success that the enemy's infantry, who, before the evening, made at least twenty counter-attacks from Moscou, never succeeded in carrying an attack through. But the position had the great disadvantage that, supposing that the artillery of the 7th Corps had really been able to get up to it and its neighbourhood, it was from it possible only to fire on the nearer

The corps-  
artillery.



slope of the heights of Moscou-Point du Jour—that is to say, on the skirmishers and not on the plateau, where the masses of troops stood. For these masses, owing to the difference of level, could neither be seen nor hit; while, on the contrary, from the position to the east of Gravelotte it was possible to keep permanently under fire both the slope and the plateau, and this without exposure to a destructive infantry fire. Thus from the point of view of pure artillery tactics, they gave up yet another advantage.

The arrival  
at St.  
Hubert.

While the four batteries were trotting up, with the 4th Light (Trautmann) in front, then the 3rd Light (Gnügge), then the 3rd Horse (Hasse), and last the 4th Heavy (Lemmer), an unearthly stillness reigned over the heights of Moscou and Point du Jour; but as soon as the first Prussian guns were visible, this quiet changed in an instant into the most terrible vitality. From Moscou to Point du Jour was one incessant flash from rifles and guns, and in a moment the whole slope was shrouded in a white cloud of smoke, from which streamed tongues of flame. No one knew how near they were to the enemy, and an unceasing hail of bullets poured in on the batteries.

The leading  
battery  
(Traut-  
mann).

Captain Lemmer was killed at once, and soon after Captain Trautmann was severely wounded. As he lay on the ground, his battery passed on, and he even then exerted himself to bring it into position. But the front gun had already been stopped, owing to the leaders being shot, and only five guns of the battery, under Lieutenant Humann I., formed line to the south-east of St. Hubert. As they came up into position, horses and men fell dead and wounded, but they succeeded in unlimbering and in opening fire on Moscou. But not for long! Scarcely had a few rounds been fired, when the wounded horses, wild with terror, rushed with the limbers towards the narrow neck of the road, where at this moment the 4th Ulans were striving to gain the open ground. The confusion spread to the whole of the cavalry, which was then on the road. The battery still possessed one limber and five guns, but the detachments were shot down, and only one or two gunners remained with the guns. The battery was entirely out of action. Efforts were made, the two remaining officers assisting, to bring off the guns by means of the only limber left, but besides these officers there were only one sergeant and three gunners unhurt; two guns were, however, brought away, but the other four remained out in the open until the evening, when they were brought back by reserve teams. The brave battery leader lay near them in his blood; he saw his battery, which had been so smart, shattered to pieces before his eyes, gun after gun; his loud, stern voice, which his men so dreaded, could not pierce the roar of the battle; he crawled like a snake along the ground, in the endeavour to reach his guns, but he could not resist fate, and he now commanded only ruined material, which has no human soul and cannot hear. The haggard man, with his pale features, a terror to the living, at once self-possessed, eager and fierce, had to dree his weird; but the joy of battle did not leave him, though he could no longer fight. Prostrate on the ground, he turned his face towards the

heights which the enemy held, and when he saw a shell burst well, his voice rang gladly over the field of death.

Captain Hasse followed the five guns of Lieutenant Humann I. The H.A. battery, taking ground to the south of the main road, moved like lightning through this hell of fire. The wheel could be observed from Gravelotte, and all hearts throbbed to see what would be their fate. Would they be able to form line? The battery commander who was leading at a headlong pace, with a sign of his hand swung the battery round, as if with a magic wand, until it faced Moscou; every one was at once off his horse, and all six guns let fly immediately. But the infantry fire from Point du Jour swept the right flank of the battery, draught and riding horses fell in heaps, while others rushed away through the guns; three officers, of whom the battery leader was one, were at once wounded, and a young lieutenant took over the command. But the leader soon returned to his guns, and his small, thick-set figure moved about everywhere, as his Westphalian blood began to boil. Suddenly there was a howling shrieking detonation; a shell struck the axle of No. 1 gun, and destroyed it; but order was still preserved, and the battery fired without intermission upon Moscou, and made hit after hit on the ranks of the enemy. But gradually also this battery leader saw his battery melt away; the heap of dead horses in rear continually increased, while between the guns there was a confused mixture of dead and wounded—of both armies, for the French had before held this spot. After half an hour, only five guns could be served, and two minutes later the remainder of the detachments were only sufficient for three guns, while, when this was arranged, a further reduction had to be made, until as the two hours under fire drew near their end, the leader had, including himself, only enough men left to serve one gun. The limber ammunition had been all expended, the ammunition-waggons could not be brought up, and the guns were defenceless, powerless, and unable to move. The fortunes of the battery had been from the beginning watched from Gravelotte, as it dashed from the defile like a column of dust driven by a hurricane; it could be seen with glasses how gun after gun was crushed, and how the living organism changed into a motionless, black, dense, helpless mass. There could be no doubt that this battery also had met its fate. Lieutenant-General Schwarz consequently sent it an order to abandon its untenable position. But, impressed with the necessity for holding his ground, Captain Hasse answered that he would rather die than fall back. The order was repeated; but it was now too late, for the battery had in the mean time lost the power to move. Still Captain Hasse found means to delay the catastrophe. There was a limber near Humann's Battery, and the brave gunners made their way backwards and forwards to it, until they had fired the last shell in it. Thus two hours passed, after which the enemy's fire slackened, and Major Coester appeared with some fresh teams. They endeavoured to hook in, but scarcely had they got the fresh horses into their places than some of them fell by the fire of the enemy. At length perseverance triumphed, and it was just possible

The second  
battery  
(Hasse).

to drive off. But in what condition was the battery? The limbers and carriages were covered with bullets; the gunners and drivers were on foot, and the limbers were laden with the severely wounded; thus the battery retired at a walk through the long road. The last gun, which had only two horses, and was heavily loaded with wounded, had Major Coester's special care, and he kept his eye fixed on it as it left the field of battle. Just as it was hoped that the zone of fire had been passed, a horse in the last limber was shot. It had to halt again, and fresh aid had to be procured; but when the gun had been again rendered capable of movement the battery began to slowly climb up the road to Gravelotte. Here it was greeted with loud cheers, and General Schwarz kissed the battery leader before all the troops.

The third  
battery  
(Gnügge).

The 3rd Light Battery (Gnügge) formed line behind the knee-high garden wall of the farm of St. Hubert, having, while the two first-named batteries left the road to the south, followed the main road at a gallop as far as the point at which it unlimbered. It was therefore the farthest to the east of the three, and, like Hasse's battery, offered its left flank to the enemy at Point du Jour, while its fire was directed upon Moscou. Captain Gnügge did not open fire so quickly as Captain Hasse, since at the very beginning a considerable number of horses and men were shot down, so that the guns were not ready for action for several minutes. But after this they produced an excellent effect, so much so that the two batteries (Hasse's and Gnügge's) reduced the enemy to the strict defensive. Gnügge's battery also suffered severe loss, but it held its ground, after Captain Hasse had been recalled, until night brought the battle to an end. At about 6 p.m. General von Goeben rode up to Captain Gnügge, and confirmed him in his decision to hold the position.

The fourth  
battery  
(Lemmer).

Much light implies much shadow, and thus beside this heroism we find a less attractive example. The last battery which arrived on the scene of the struggle was the 4th Heavy. The officer who took over the command after the fall of Captain Lemmer was, with the battery, at first in rear of the 3rd H.A. Battery. With the latter he moved into the open ground to the south of the main road. At this point the leader seems to have lost his head, for the battery did not succeed in unlimbering. Seeing the road to Gravelotte occupied by the cavalry who were streaming to the front, and finding no space on which to form line, the battery drew off into a wood track which led away into the Mance Ravine; passing through this, it came upon impassable ground, where it stood fast, and where it was discovered on the morning of the 19th!

The de-  
ployment  
of the 4th  
Ulans.

The 4th Light and the 3rd H.A. Batteries were in front of the 4th Ulans, while the 3rd Light and the 4th Heavy were on their left flank. Before the point of the Ulans approached the eastern exit, Colonel von Radecke (of that regiment) had pushed to St. Hubert, in order to make certain of the situation. Radecke there met Colonel von Helden, who at once informed him as to the difficult situation of the struggle. Colonel von Radecke then observed the fate of the 4th Light Battery, and, while the 3rd H.A. and the 3rd

Light Batteries were unlimbering, the 4th Ulsans had started at a trot. At this moment Colonel von Radecke rejoined them from St. Hubert, and led the regiment at a quicker pace, but in good order, across the main road to the right (south).

Since at this time the 4th Heavy Battery was on the left of the 4th Ulsans, Colonel von Radecke was unable to attempt to carry out the order of General von Steinmetz, which directed him to form line towards Moscou and to charge; he would thus have been compelled at this critical moment to wait—that is to say, to halt—while that battery marched past him. Considering the mass of cavalry which was following, Radecke held this to be impossible; he therefore determined to choose the lesser evil, and to form with his front towards Point du Jour. As he was carrying out this movement, and when the 4th Ulsans had reached the right of the 4th Light Battery, Colonel Radecke heard behind him the trumpet-call, "Retire!" which was sounded by the order of General von Hartmann. Under the fearful fire which at this moment was poured upon the artillery and the 4th Ulsans, a retirement appeared to Colonel von Radecke to be a very doubtful proceeding; but it was also impossible for the regiment to remain in their then position. He therefore ordered the "Gallop!" to be sounded, and at this pace the regiment advanced directly on the gravel-pits. When the point was within about 200 yards of the latter, Radecke ordered "Front!" to be sounded; but the trumpet of the colonel's trumpeter had been pierced by a bullet, and would not sound. In this difficulty Trumpeter Rohleder shouted, "Mine is all right," and blew a loud "Front!" The movement was carried out in good order as far as the rear sections of the regiment, which had in the mean time obeyed the call "Retire!" But even these sections took up the right direction in good time. Thus the 4th Ulsans were now deployed in line, and fronting towards Point du Jour, being about 450 yards from the enemy's shelter-trenches; about 200 yards to their right were six companies of the 33rd, who reached from the gravel-pits up to the quarries of Rozerieulles; in rear of them were the remnants of the 60th Regiment, while to their left was the 4th Light Battery, which had in the mean time been put out of action, and of which the men were engaged in bringing off the guns. An insignificant fold of the ground somewhat diminished the height of the line of cavalry, and most of the shot passed over their heads; their loss was thus comparatively small. Colonel von Radecke held his ground for about an hour,\* but since he then saw nothing which he could charge, while the 4th Light (and the 4th Heavy) Battery had abandoned the struggle, and the losses increased, Colonel von Radecke gave orders to retire. The two squadrons on the left, under Major Ritgen, began the movement through the wood by the side of the main road, while the two on the right remained at first halted,

\* So says the regimental history of the 4th Ulsans. In my opinion, this is improbable, and even impossible; for in that case the charge which the French later on made from Point du Jour would have affected the 4th Ulsans. But the latter were no longer present. I cannot think that the Ulsans held their ground for more than thirty minutes, but even this was a grand feat.



under Colonel von Radecke, in order to cover the withdrawal of the wounded. After this had been completed, von Radecke followed with both squadrons along the road to the Mance mill. On the way, Radecke's horse was shot, but he mounted another, and led his men beyond the Mance Valley back to the starting-point of the undertaking.

Losses of  
the troops.

He arrived again at the 1st Cavalry Division, at Malmaison, at 7.30 p.m., Major Ritgen having got there at 6.30 p.m. The regiment lost 3 officers, 49 men, and 101 horses, while the 1st Cavalry Division lost 7 officers, 88 men, and 177 horses. The loss of the four batteries was as follows:—

				Killed and Wounded.
The 4th Heavy	...	...	...	1 officer and 6 men.
The 3rd Light	...	...	...	1 officer and 15 men.
The 4th Light	...	...	...	2 officers and 12 men.
The 3rd H.A.	...	...	...	3 officers and 35 men.

I have not been able to ascertain exactly the loss of the individual batteries in horses; it was not throughout large; the heaviest was in the 3rd H.A., which lost 70. The comparatively small loss of the 3rd Light Battery, which held its ground at St. Hubert until night, is remarkable.

After the 1st Cavalry Division had returned to Malmaison, their battery re-opened its fire in the former position of the 8th Corps.

The two hussar regiments (the 9th and the 15th) also fell back to their old positions.

The moral  
and  
material  
reaction  
from the  
attempt.

Bad as was the impression which the failure of this attempt made in rear of the line of battle upon the staffs and troops which were around Gravelotte, its material and tactical evil consequences, in addition to the general moral loss which it involved, were yet greater. After carefully searching into the matter, I may refer the reader, for the reasons why this attempt must of necessity have failed, to what has been already said, for everything is contained in that. Upon a false hypothesis, without suitable dispositions, and without first making certain by reconnaissance whether the hypothesis was correct (which, considering the uncertainty of the situation, was undoubtedly the duty of the superior commander who gave the orders for the entire plan), a crisis which lasted for altogether about 1½ hours was brought about. During this time the greater part of the artillery of the 7th Corps had been compelled to watch the fight in diminished strength, and when this artillery had again to open fire from their old position, the circumstances had so changed that the order which had before existed in the line of fire could not again be re-established. Moreover, the space available for the batteries when they re-opened fire could not be carefully divided, so that a second disadvantage followed that of the long cessation of fire, in that Major von Eynatten had, owing to want of room, to draw back two light batteries and one heavy to the west of Gravelotte, where from 4.30 p.m. they remained out of action. In the third place, the attempt had cost the 7th Corps two batteries (the 4th Light and the 3rd H.A.), which had been crushed, while a third (the 4th Heavy) had in the mean time



"lost its way"; thus, since three other batteries could not find room, there were altogether, after 5 p.m., no less than 36 guns missing; that is to say, one-third of the whole available artillery of the 7th Corps. This was a diminution of strength so marked that the French could not fail to again recover their breath. And they did indeed recover it!

The French observers of the drama which has been described could not believe their eyes. They could not guess whether it was an act of simple madness, or of an amount of courage which would have been previously thought impossible. Whatever it might be, the enemy, full of astonishment and wonder, at first watched the progress of events, but finally poured in the whole force of their fire, which had been held back for a long time. They watched the destruction of the Prussian batteries, who were within charging distance, and the regiment of Ulan, which formed line in front of the wood, and which for a considerable time masked the infantry fire along our front, and the artillery and the cavalry seemed to them a sure prey, as after about an hour they prepared to drive them back again. Moreover, the capture of the southern part of the quarry of Rozerieulles (at 3 p.m.) by the 33rd had greatly troubled General Frossard. This, as he saw, was the point from which he might be utterly destroyed, and it was therefore worth while to run all risks in order to recapture the quarry. The commanders of the 2nd and 3rd French Corps issued instructions to this effect. But an attack which started from Moscou, and advanced directly upon St. Hubert, was nipped in the bud by the effective shells fired by Hasse's and Gnügge's Batteries; a second, in smaller strength, which was undertaken against Gnügge's Battery alone, came to an end in the same way, after which from this side and in this direction no other counter-attack really took place; they all failed at the outset.

Ideas of the French with regard to taking the offensive.

The case was very different with the 2nd French Corps. Frossard had observed the destruction of the Prussian batteries and the partial capture of the quarry of Rozerieulles, and had near Point du Jour prepared an infantry reserve of several columns in anticipation of a favourable moment. It consisted of the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 55th, part of the 1st Battalion of the 76th, and three companies of the 77th, in all about three battalions. As the 4th Ulan were drawing off, these troops burst out straight to their front from Point du Jour in a long line, which reached from the quarries to within about 350 yards to the south of the main road. The attack was carried out with extraordinary energy and rapidity, and was thus completely successful along the whole line; the quarry was recaptured, and even the gravel-pits were temporarily lost by the 33rd. As the attack rushed on, it swept along the rear of Gnügge's Battery, at a distance of about 200 yards, but came in contact neither with this battery, nor with St. Hubert, nor with the main road and all that was on it, which had been selected as its prey. The 1st, 2nd, and 8th companies of the 33rd were completely run over; other parts of the 2nd Battalion of the 33rd, and also the 1st and 2nd companies of that regiment, had turned back to the eastern edge of the wood, but were in the excitement of the moment received as they approached with such a hot fire by the 60th,

Frossard's offensive. Recapture of the quarry.

who were there, that the last bonds of discipline gave way, and both regiments rushed to the rear in panic fear, and in complete confusion. The impression made by the terror in their faces, weary as they were with the long struggle, as they rushed without helmets or arms from the western edge of the wood, certainly did not tend to raise the moral attitude of the troops at Gravelotte, who were still suffering from the former failure, and many staff officers now began to glance gloomily towards the rear. The zone of the enemy's infantry fire was visibly advancing; large quantities of their bullets fell in Gravelotte and among the artillery who were to the south of that village. The horse of Prince Adalbert of Prussia was here shot under him by a bullet, and the staff of the 1st Army did not escape.

The details  
of the rein-  
forcement  
of the 15th  
Division.

General von Goeben had observed the events which have been described. Though he foresaw the inevitable end, he possessed neither the right nor the power to ward off the unavoidable consequences; since he had let the 31st Brigade out of his hand, and had been left in ignorance of what Generals von Steinmetz and von Zastrow had arranged, he could for the moment do nothing but wait, and he counted the minutes with a beating heart until this waiting should find its end. Every minute seemed an hour. What had in the mean time become of the 31st Brigade? The disorder in rear of the 15th Division, which has been described, for a time distressed him anew, for how would it be if an energetic attack from Moscou should now take place against the northern side of the main road? In that case, the 15th Division would be lost, and with it St. Hubert and everything which had been won up to that time. Pushing to the front, in order to see things with his own eyes, he yet could and dare do nothing, though the need for action weighed heavily upon him. Goeben was delighted to see that the attempt of Generals von Steinmetz and von Zastrow came to a better end than he had expected under the circumstances. The enemy at Moscou had up to this time gained no advantage; but when the rush from Point du Jour seemed to progress in favour of the French, Goeben watched most earnestly to see whether anything of the same kind would be undertaken from Moscou. But the enemy was there in a very different condition, and Goeben was calm, as he saw clearly how the shells of Gnügge's Battery nipped every attempt in the bud. Goeben breathed again, but felt that he must speak to the leader of the battery; the old soldier-spirit drove him still farther to the front. But a leader in war must repress such impulses, for he has first to deal with more important matters.

We have already shown how the dispositions of Generals von Steinmetz and von Zastrow had doomed the artillery of the 7th Corps to inaction for a long time, and a great part of them (36 guns) to permanent silence. We shall now show how these same dispositions also delayed for a full hour Goeben's plan for reinforcing the 15th Division, and then made this reinforcement almost altogether illusory. The reader will thus be able to grasp the unpleasantness of Goeben's situation, since he had to suffer for the errors of others, without being able to do anything to remedy them.

The point of the 29th, marching on the main road, had passed the eastern edge of the wood, when the events which have been related with respect to the artillery of the 7th Corps and the 1st Cavalry Division took place. Since the 29th were in sections, the depth of the column of the regiment was very great. Since the artillery and the cavalry rushed forwards, as they were compelled to do, the 29th were cut in half and obliged to halt! In this manner Goeben's intention was hindered and upset. The regiment now came up between the quarries of St. Hubert and the eastern edge of the wood. At 4 p.m. the position was as follows, passing from left to right :—

The Fusilier Battalion and the 8th and 7th companies of the 69th were engaged towards La Folie-Leipzig. At this important point, therefore, the 15th Division seemed amply strong, and in this direction Goeben's intentions had been suitably carried out.

The 6th and 5th companies and the 1st Battalion of the 69th to the south of the above, rested their right on the main road, having pushed forward on to the 28th, and having later on taken up a front towards Moscou-St. Hubert; here also the reinforcement had been carried out in good time.

On the other hand, the ten rear companies of the 29th were, at the point specified, separated from the two leading companies, so that only the 1st and the 4th companies could carry out the reinforcement to some extent simultaneously with the other portions of the 31st Brigade; the other ten companies could not come up. Of the two companies, the 1st, after a useless rush towards Point du Jour, had turned towards St. Hubert; while the 4th, after a similar unsuccessful rush in the same direction, were lying in the open on a level with Gnügge's Battery. It was not until the road had been again cleared that the 3rd and 2nd companies were able to follow; the 3rd moved towards St. Hubert, while the 2nd remained to the west in the quarries. Thus this action also was foredoomed to failure, and nothing could be altogether worked out or carried through, since the troops came up in small fractions, and since the later fractions attempted the same impossibility as the earlier (and finished with the same calamity), in that they steadily insisted in attacking in companies over open ground, without thinking of first establishing an infantry fire-position within effective range. If this had been provided, if they had set to work to produce an effect from it, and had brought up their reserves in rear of it, then, and only then, would they have satisfied the conditions which govern success; while, after the example of the 3rd Light and the 3rd H.A. Batteries, and also that of the 4th Ulan, it is impossible to deny that it could have been done. But each body of troops, whether they had red, blue, or white facings, kept up the same faults as the others until late into the night. After the 1st Battalion of the 29th had been mowed down to the south of St. Hubert, the Fusilier battalion of the same regiment met with the same fate, to the north of that farm, when attacking Moscou. Both of its attacks were energetically undertaken, but the Fusilier battalion also had to go the way of all flesh. The greater part of the battalion fell back to the fork of the valley to the south-west of Leipzig, while

the smaller part (two sections of the 12th, and one each of the 9th and 11th companies) retired towards St. Hubert.

After the Fusilier Battalion of the 29th had been shattered, the 2nd Battalion came up into action. It followed the same direction as the other two battalions, and did exactly the same as they did; the 6th and 7th companies attacked Point du Jour with great courage, and got to within 150 yards of the shelter-trenches, but at that point they fell to pieces; the commander of the regiment led up the 5th company, with the object of bringing aid to the Fusilier battalion. He now tried to do with one company what he had previously failed to do with four, while in order to make some use of the 8th company also, he told it off to serve as escort to Hasse's and Gnügge's Batteries! This is an excellent example of the manner in which, in those days, our infantry was made to fight; no one seemed to remember that the men had rifles, for what was done here might just as well have been carried out if they had had clubs; at any rate, absolutely no one had any idea how to reap any of the advantages of the rifle. Eventually, all that remained of the 2nd Battalion of the 29th fell back like the others to St. Hubert. At about the same time, all that was left of the 1st Battalion of the 69th also appeared at St. Hubert; they had endeavoured also to carry the heights of Moscou in companies and without firing a shot, even though the several companies had, "owing to the thick wood, lost their direction and their coherence." The only sensible ones were the 5th and 6th companies; they did nothing at all, but fell back on St. Hubert. When no one understood how to take a battalion under fire in a reasonable manner, and how next to bring it up to the attack, could we possibly expect to be able to capture such a position? It is true that we had got as far as fighting in companies, but as for doing so in battalions, regiments, or brigades, we knew nothing about it. Why could we not do it? In peace, we played about with brigades on the drill-ground, but in war we did not know how to fight with battalions; this was because "we had not learnt to fight." We may judge from the 10th company of the 69th how the troops came helter-skelter "through the wood;" it drifted from the left flank of the brigade to the right, and fortunately got also to St. Hubert; the very counterpart of the cross-march which the 33rd had been carrying out since midday. Thus, under the circumstances which have been narrated, the right wing of the 31st Infantry Brigade required nearly an hour and a half to bring up a reinforcement over about a mile and a half. We were indeed very lucky, for during this time much might have happened if—if—Supposing that, as has been before said, cuttings had been made in the wood, the troops would not have lost their direction, they would not have "crossed each other," they would not have "lost their way," they would not have attacked "by companies" and "in close order;" we should not have seen 32 squadrons, 5 batteries, and 3 battalions, all belonging to different units, crowded and jumbled together, etc., etc., etc., or, at any rate, we should not have been "compelled" to do all this. But in tactics there is always one grand excuse—the circumstances. We should then have had fixed grounds upon which to deal with time



and space, and sufficient lines of communication to admit of reinforcement and direction. Goeben might then have been certain that the 31st Infantry Brigade would have come up along the whole line by 3.30 p.m. at the latest.

Almost simultaneously with the arrival of the 2nd and 3rd companies of the 29th, Colonel Eskens had brought over the ravine, to the south of the main road, first two battalions and then the 3rd Battalion of the 39th. The three battalions extended along the eastern edge of the wood, and pushed on into the fight in the space to the south of the quarries of St. Hubert and halfway to the gravel-pits. They took little account of the enemy's fire, and kept their order excellently, so that their shock brought the French attack from Point du Jour first to a standstill, and then to a retirement. This would perhaps have been the moment for a successful general attack, if only sufficient force had stood ready on the right, and if any one had known how to use it.

When the 39th advanced into the fight, the 7th Corps spread into the sphere of action of the 8th; it is true that the batteries of the 7th Corps, which have been previously mentioned, had already either done this or tried to do it, but only in very rare cases does the mixture of the artillery of different units with other artillery, or with other arms, cause any tactical disadvantage. This is far from being the case with infantry. If it be desired to hold together a force, with which it is proposed to deal a heavy blow, any disturbance of the units of command which is not inevitable must be avoided. In this case, it was desired to strike a great blow, but the means which were taken to that end made such a blow impossible; there was no necessity for thus mixing two corps. For, even if what was done had been tactically correct, the 32nd Infantry Brigade, which had been ready for a long time on the west of Gravelotte, ought to have been used. But the time for this was not yet come, since the reinforcement of the 15th Division by the 31st Brigade had not yet made itself felt, and Goeben did not wish to lose command of the 32nd Brigade until a fresh reserve (the 2nd Corps) was in readiness in rear of his front. But this was not yet the case, since the 3rd Division had only just got to Rezonville. The mixture of the infantry of the 7th and 8th Corps in the neighbourhood of St. Hubert was not intentional, and was therefore a fault. While at 4 p.m. the garrison of St. Hubert was already both too mixed and too large, it had by 5 p.m. increased to forty-three companies, which belonged to seven different regiments (including the 8th Jägers), and it was here that took place what some have called the "hotch-potch" of the infantry. A "hotch-potch" of this kind is unmanageable, and a terrible cause of waste of strength. Up to 3 p.m., neither General von Steinmetz nor General von Zastrow had understood how to hold the numerous infantry of the 7th Corps, who were distributed around Gravelotte, in readiness for an attack from the Bois de Vaux, or how to lead them in the direction which was tactically suitable. By 5 p.m. two more hours had passed, during which equally nothing whatever was done in this respect. There had been there, ready for this purpose, the three

Arrival of  
the 39th.

Mixture of  
the infantry  
of the  
7th and  
8th Corps.



battalions of the 74th, the three battalions of the 77th, three of the 73rd, the Fusilier Battalion of the 53rd, and the 2nd and 3rd companies of the 13th, in all ten and a half fresh battalions, with which no one knew how to do anything useful, whilst all the steps of which we have spoken, which were intended to result in a "pursuit" on the opposite slope of the Mance Valley, had produced nothing but a series of repulses. What was tactically prudent and practicable was not recognized, attempted, or ordered, while what was tactically foolish and impossible was striven for with an amount of energy which would have been both necessary and successful at another point, and with suitable measures.

*C. From 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.*

Pause in  
the action.  
Interrup-  
tion of the  
German  
attack.

After 5 p.m. there was a pause in the action along the entire front of the 1st Army, which by chance coincided in point of time with a similar pause of the 2nd Army. Both German armies had now to suffer from the disadvantages caused by unsuitable and, tactically speaking, too hurried handling; in the 1st Army this was due to the higher commanders; in the 2nd, on the contrary, to that of the junior officers; the sources of error were thus diametrically opposite. The very best of men may err, but we ought to be able to abandon mistakes which we have recognized as such. It is true that not everything in the 2nd Army had up to this time been exactly all that might be wished, yet, owing to activity of the supreme leader and his suitable dispositions, which show a sure guidance and a striving after a great strategical aim, entirely conforming to, and even surpassing, the grand views of Moltke, it was possible to tide over the crisis comparatively well and quickly; but with the 1st Army, in spite of the certain knowledge of the governing tactical conditions which had been possessed since 5 p.m., this was by no means the case. After that hour, as before it, everything remained uncertain, objectless, planless, and confused. The 1st Army, up to 5 p.m., had not suffered very great loss; there could be no question of an exhaustion of its strength, and it had merely, as regards the greater part of it, crumbled away owing to its being badly led; for the 15th Division alone could be considered as being much injured, and that had actually lost about 20 per cent. of its strength in the battle.

If after 5 p.m. it was proposed to undertake some general movement against the enemy, now that full information had been obtained with regard to their condition, there was ample time and a sufficient number of troops available for this purpose; but no use was made of either the one or the other. Before anything else, order should have been established in the firing-line of the infantry on the eastern slope of the Mance Valley, and orders should have been given for some such action as we have proposed in Chapter V. There would still have been time for it. No thought of all this seems to have arisen, although the behaviour and the perseverance of the artillery and of the 4th Ulans irrefutably proved the possibility and the practicability of the instalment of an infantry fire-position. No one even succeeded

in holding with infantry, as a firing-line, the ground in a line with Gnügge's Battery. The latter indeed remained, until near the evening, to the south of the main road, and in a position in front of the firing-line of the infantry. The bodies of the men and horses of the infantry, the artillery, and the 4th Ulans had, since 5 p.m., much diminished the possibility of movement to the south of the main road. At this point, the field of battle offered a scene of confusion; abandoned guns with capsized and broken limbers were irregularly mingled together. No doubt the heaps of corpses, both of men and horses, and the masses of material might have afforded a certain amount of cover, but no one tried to use it. At 5 p.m. about two and a half regiments of infantry were standing in columns, one behind the other, between St. Hubert and the eastern edge of the wood; they were all penned up together in confusion, in all kinds of units, and beyond all power of command. These masses, standing thus, and exposed for a long time to the fire from Point du Jour and Moscou, afforded a distant target for the French; yet during two hours, between 5 and 7 p.m., no one seems to have thought of withdrawing these masses, which must have hindered the development and movement of any fresh troops, who might propose to pass to the north or south from the main road to the field of battle; this would have been absolutely necessary, and this infantry might then have been reorganized and have been prepared on the eastern edge of the wood for some other task. In this manner we ourselves deprived ourselves of our main fighting strength at these points, and, moreover, hindered later on the development of other troops.

It is not possible for any one to believe—at least in the Prussian army, in which the so-called "drawing-on" through defiles has always been one of the best-beloved "schemes" of the drill-ground (everything belonging to it having been literally crammed up)—that no one here, from the commander of the army to the junior lieutenant, had the presence of mind to remember this simple lesson. Thus the situation remained the same during two hours; or, in other words, the natural defile was prolonged, by living walls of crowded masses of men, up to within a short distance of St. Hubert. We thus deprived ourselves later on of the last means of obtaining a tactical development, while the troops, who, during two hours, had formed a human wall towards Point du Jour and St. Hubert, were, at the time of the last counter-attack of the French (about 7 p.m.), and of the arrival of the 2nd Corps, morally so worn out that, for the most part, they no longer knew their right hands from their left, or their friends from their enemies; and when the 3rd Division reached the Mance Valley with drums beating and bugles blowing, and, as they climbed up the eastern slope, unfortunately opened fire from the rear upon these demoralized infantry, the latter suddenly fell to pieces like a house of cards, and poured to the rear in a wild panic, rushing, shouting, and quite out of their senses, to an extent indeed which has seldom happened in the history of war. All this, following the law of cause and effect, was simply the result of the mode of leading, and was really due to the supreme commanders. A few hours before, the same

drama had taken place on the same spot; was it therefore necessary to repeat it in an exaggerated form?

Attitude of  
the French.

The enemy were justified in considering the failure of every attempt of the Germans, up to 5 p.m., to gain ground towards Point du Jour and Moscou, as a decided tactical success. On the other hand, the defender had entirely expended and exhausted his strength in bringing this about; thus a pause in the battle at this moment was the most welcome thing which could have happened. If, however, the ten and a half battalions of the 7th Corps, of which we have spoken, had at this moment attacked the south-west point of the quarries of Rozerieulles, the position would at that very hour have fallen into our hands. And this was exactly the tactical step which the time and circumstances called for, and which was ripe for action until 5 p.m. There can be no question in this case of any outcry as to bungling tactics or criticism, for it was absolutely obligatory to thus act, having regard to what was ordered and what was known about the enemy.

Instead of this, the Germans contented themselves for an hour and a half with a simple, and not always actively conducted, artillery combat. The French used the time skilfully and energetically; it was actually to them a stroke of luck which saved them, and their behaviour was exactly what it should have been—which cannot be said of that of the Germans. The troops were re-organized, the position newly occupied, the supply of cartridges filled up, and the reserves withdrawn; in short, breathing time was given all along the line, which is the surest means of prolonging the endurance of moral force. It was impossible for the Germans to find out all this from their position; but much of it was observed, with the result that they realized that the enemy was preparing himself against a new attack from them. If this was to be carried out in exactly the same direction as the former attacks, they would again fulfil the hopes of the French! Nothing but the consideration of all these things, taken together, will make clear the tenacity of the enemy and the failure of the German infantry from the first to the last of their many attempts to attack.

Want of  
harmony  
between  
the head-  
quarters  
and the  
1st Army.

The head-quarters had been at Flavigny since the commencement of the battle. It had, at 10.30 a.m., ordered the attack by the 1st Army to be "simultaneous" with that by the 2nd, and had further directed it to take place from Gravelotte and the Bois de Vaux; it had, moreover, directed General von Steinmetz "only to show his artillery in case it was necessary to do so in order to prepare a later attack." General von Steinmetz received these instructions at 1.15 p.m. For reasons which have been given, more had happened on the German right than this last instruction supposed; but the main idea which ruled everything was the order to attack (of 10.30 a.m.), and this set the principal task, while the instructions of 12 o'clock served only for guidance in a certain special case. This must be strictly borne in mind, and care must be taken not to reverse the importance of these two things. The cause of the instructions were "the isolated struggle in front of Verneville which is now (12 o'clock) audible." If this cause ceased, General von Steinmetz was completely

free to make what decisions he pleased, and the instructions of 12 o'clock had no longer any importance for him, since they were set aside by the lapse of time and the change of circumstances; thus the general had to concern himself only with the contents of the order of attack, but this he must carry out fully.

When the instructions of 12 o'clock arrived (at 1.15 p.m.), the 1st Army no longer considered that the thunder of the guns on their left was a mere engagement, certainly not an isolated struggle. By 1.15 p.m. both their eyes and their ears told them that it was a general action; and by 2 p.m. they could have no doubt whatever on the matter, as regarded themselves. Thus the cause had ceased, and the instructions no longer affected Steinmetz. Everything, therefore, which took place at the front, up to the capture of St. Hubert, was accurately arranged, correct, and in accordance with the spirit of the order of 10.30 a.m.; on the other hand, General von Steinmetz carried out this order on one side only, namely, in his front from Gravelotte, and not on his flank from the Bois de Vaux. The order (of 3 p.m.) to the 26th Infantry Brigade ought to have been given immediately after the receipt of the order of 10.30 a.m., and to have been then despatched, after which the further steps of which we have spoken should have been taken. The action of General von Steinmetz after 3 p.m. was faulty, not because he acted in opposition to the order of 10.30 a.m., but because the manner in which he executed that order showed that he failed to grasp it or to carry out its intention.

But whatever may be our opinion on this point, Moltke's orders of 12 o'clock could not have been understood by General von Steinmetz otherwise than that further instructions would follow, which would prolong the thread of the former; and these threads should have been prolonged, since the instructions of midday seem incomplete both in their contents and in their form, and, so to speak, were like an A which must be followed by a B, that is to say, by instructions "as to when the moment had arrived when Steinmetz was to attack; that he was to attack simultaneously with the 2nd Army; since the engagement at Verneville had ceased to be a mere engagement, and was certainly no longer an isolated struggle." Such instructions ought to have been received by General von Steinmetz from General von Moltke. But no such instructions ever arrived. They did not arrive, because Moltke at Flavigny, soon after the despatch of the instructions of midday, came himself to the conclusion that the grounds on which these instructions were founded had themselves no foundation. When Steinmetz received nothing more after the instructions of midday, he must have said to himself (considering the increasing severity of the battle), that no such instructions had been issued; since at the head-quarters they could hear what was going on as well as he could. For this reason Steinmetz, as far as regards all that took place in his front up to 3 p.m., was entirely right; though certainly, when we say this, we must mark the difference between that which Steinmetz ordered, and that which Goeben brought about.

Although all this is now quite clear and distinct, yet the evidence



of the Official Account brings a charge which is plainly directed against Steinmetz. I have not endeavoured to hide the points where Steinmetz was in fault, and in the same manner I am prepared to defend him where the Official Account does him groundless wrong. Steinmetz was very much to blame; he was so in points of which the Official Account says nothing, but he was not so with regard to matters on which it wastes many words. The flagrant neglect to scout in front of the 2nd Army, the crossing of the 12th and the Guard Corps, etc., have been glossed over, although these two faults, to say nothing of others, were sufficient to destroy Moltke's sequence of ideas; while with respect to everything else which happened, with or without Steinmetz, all the blame is heaped upon him, and attention is even drawn to it by the use of italics.

But no further instructions from Moltke to Steinmetz could exist, since Moltke himself did not receive "any distinct information concerning the circumstances" of the 2nd Army "until a late hour in the afternoon." Why is this "late hour" not exactly stated? It was really 5 p.m., and thus Steinmetz is from this point of view justified up to 3 p.m. It is incorrect to state that the main idea of the instructions for the right wing was—

"A delaying action on the part of the main force, until the left wing of the 2nd Army had fully observed the condition of affairs on the northern lines of retreat of the enemy, and, supposing the French Army to make a stand to the west of Metz, until their right flank had been turned from the north."

Moltke, no doubt, thought of this, but he did not send any instructions based on this to the 1st Army. He did not inform them where the right flank of the French really rested, when the 2nd Army attacked "simultaneously." Later on in the afternoon, since Moltke could have sent Steinmetz more exact instructions, there would still have been time to commence an attack of the 1st Army "from Gravelotte and the Bois de Vaux."

The head-quarters had, after 1 p.m., drawn nearer to the right flank, since, at 2 p.m., it changed its standpoint from Flavigny to Rezonville. After the 2nd Corps had been ordered to remain temporarily at Rezonville, the head-quarters rode on farther to the front; at 4.30 p.m., that is to say, after the unfortunate "pursuit," it arrived in rear of the right flank of the 1st Army! Up to that time General von Steinmetz had carefully informed the head-quarters of everything which had happened in chronological order; first as to the success of the artillery against the batteries of Point du Jour, then the capture of the woods, then that of St. Hubert, and finally the advance of our cavalry and artillery over the valley of the Mance. Since the orders for the last of these were given at 3 p.m., and the head-quarters were then still at Rezonville, there is some appearance of probability that at this time it was there considered that the decision would be brought about near Gravelotte, and that they for this reason left the bad position which had been selected, in order that they might be near to the decisive point.



But if anything more than "showing the artillery" on the part of the 1st Army was contrary to the intentions of Moltke, why did the latter, after receiving this chain of information from General von Steinmetz, issue no further instructions with regard to "a delaying action of the main force" of the 1st Army? How, then, can General von Steinmetz be blamed on account of the steps which he took up to 3 p.m.? At 4.15 p.m. Steinmetz reported the failure of the attempt to "pursue," and, moreover, that "the battle in the front was indecisive; and that in order to obtain success in this direction, an attack in force against the right wing of the enemy would be necessary." This report reached the head-quarters at about 4.30 p.m., and is so far of tactical importance as it teaches us that then (at 4.30) Steinmetz did not find himself in a position "to attempt any progress to his front." But instead of calling upon the 2nd Army for aid, Steinmetz should have called upon himself, and should himself have immediately and energetically commenced an attack on the enemy's left flank, for the prosecution of which he had, at this hour, ample force and time. But General von Steinmetz did not go beyond the order given to the 26th Infantry Brigade. This brigade, which received the order "during the fourth hour after noon," had by 6 p.m. slightly driven back the skirmishers of Lapasset's Brigade, and had captured the weakly held and yet more weakly defended Jussy, at which point their action ended. The enemy's general met this force with the 97th Regiment of Infantry, one company of the 14th Chasseurs and two batteries, and did not find it necessary to use the 84th Regiment of Infantry. But General von Steinmetz, when at 3 p.m. he received the orders which have been mentioned, had intended to "make an energetic advance against the enemy's left flank" with this brigade; but no one could call what the 26th Brigade did an "energetic advance." This seems also to have been recognized, since, when the brigade contented itself with the occupation of Jussy, General von der Goltz had, "as his main duty, in the spirit of the instructions received from the higher commanders, to facilitate the advance of the Prussian troops from the Bois de Vaux, and to secure the communications of the 1st Army with the rear." Further on it is stated that the position which had been captured was the best to suit both objects. We must, however, ask what instructions General von der Goltz had really received. The Official Account, on p. 828, vol. ii., names only one. Yet on p. 833 we suddenly hear of instructions, exactly such indeed as would have been absolutely correct. According to this, General von Steinmetz really had had an intention to carry out an advance of the Prussian troops from the Bois de Vaux, though at the same time the dispositions and the omissions of that general show that he never intended an attack at any point against the left flank of the French. He gave no order for an attack from the Bois de Vaux; on the contrary, at 4.15 p.m. he begged the head-quarters to arrange for an attack by the 2nd Army against the enemy's right flank.

In consequence of the dispositions made by General von Steinmetz on the early morning of the 18th, General von Manteuffel moved the

4th Infantry Brigade (5th and 45th Regiments), one squadron of the 10th Dragoons, and two batteries, in the direction of Vaux, with the result that the point of these troops arrived at Augny at 4.30 p.m. These troops were evidently not sufficient for the purpose.

Speaking of the action of these two brigades, the Official Account says:—

“The establishment of the 26th Brigade in front of the extreme left wing of the French Army had a special bearing upon the course of the battle, inasmuch as Marshal Bazaine allowed himself to be distracted, by the increased apprehension thereby caused to his left flank, from turning sufficient attention to the more important parts of the battle-field. The movements of troops taking place along the right bank of the Moselle might also appear to him to be connected with the appearance of the 26th Brigade.”

“Sufficient attention” can only mean the provision of reserves! The 26th Infantry Brigade had started to march at about 4 p.m. (?), while Bazaine had, in the very words of the Official Account, already at 3 p.m. employed all his reserves with the exception of one brigade of infantry and the cavalry. How are we to reconcile these statements? As a matter of fact, the arrival of the two brigades had no special importance, and the battle ran its course exactly on the lines on which it had been previously commenced. Bazaine made no change after the arrival of these two brigades, except that he reinforced Lapasset's Brigade by a battery or two of the Guard, and brought a few other batteries into action at St. Quentin. The French made no use of the 84th Regiment of Lapasset's Brigade, which was available. The order of events is readily displaced, and it is easy to speak of “instructions” which were really not given beforehand, while the narrator is liable to forget what he has already said in few and good words, so that in the end a picture is drawn and a sequence of events is laid down, such as in reality neither were nor could be true. This remarkable proceeding is followed by a no less remarkable “variation” as to what the 1st Army ought to have done and did. According to my narrative, no doubt can exist on this head; and so much the more wonderful is it that we find in the Official Account as follows:—

“The original task of the 1st Army, that of drawing the adversary upon itself, was fulfilled, and by the impetuosity of the troops even in a certain respect exceeded. For whilst the 7th Corps, in accordance with its former instructions, had in general limited itself to maintaining those places which it had originally occupied, the 8th had, with the capture of St. Hubert, moved close up to the enemy's main positions. The French must, therefore, have expected an attack at any moment upon their left wing, and kept, in consequence, their reserves in rear of the centre until it was too late to support the right wing.”

It is to be noted that this refers to the hour of 5 p.m., and we may say that every word, and all the efforts to obscure and put on one side the true objects, dispositions, and events are simply so many incorrect statements. The original task of the 1st Army was not to

draw the adversary upon itself, but, simultaneously with the 2nd Army, to attack from Gravelotte and the Bois de Vaux. The impetuosity of the troops did not exceed the task which they were supposed to have had given them (but which never was given); but this was done by the Generals von Steinmetz and von Zastrow, by their dispositions for pursuit which were made at 3 p.m. The capture of St. Hubert was, however, absolutely necessary, whether the 1st Army was used in the offensive or in the defensive. A bombardment with artillery neither "maintains positions" nor "draws the enemy upon one's self," nor is this a way to attain an effective defence; if this be intended, infantry must be employed to keep a hold. All Goeben's dispositions up to this time had been in accordance with the situation; but, on the other hand, what Steinmetz had ordered, as well as what he had neglected to order after 3 p.m., was out of place. Bazaine had, generally speaking, placed his reserves, not in rear of his centre, but behind his left; and he did not hold them back until 5 p.m., but had already at 3 p.m. expended them, with the exception of a remnant so small as to be of no importance.

The head-quarters had, as has been stated, moved slowly forward towards the right wing of the battle, and had at about 5 p.m. taken up a position to the south of Malmaison. Events at  
head-  
quarters  
after 5 p.m. Colonel Count Wartensleben here made a verbal report concerning the condition of affairs with the 1st Army. Lieut.-Colonel von Brandenstein arrived soon after at the head-quarters from the 2nd Army; from his report was obtained the first certain information with regard to the French right wing. From the news regarding the latter it was obvious that the dispositions of the 2nd Army were being carried out exactly in the spirit of the views which prevailed at head-quarters; indeed, that the advance which had been already made into the valley of the lower Moselle, the idea of which occurred simultaneously to Prince Frederic Charles and to the Crown Prince Albert of Saxony, had gone far beyond the bounds of a tactical turning movement. Since at that time the second line of battle was closed up in rear of the first, and was ready to hand, the head-quarters could regard the progress of affairs with the 2nd Army with confidence. Nevertheless, the head-quarters failed, until much too late, to obtain an opportunity of forming an opinion on what was going on from their own observation, leaving out of the question the position they had selected for themselves. Up to this time they had been too far from the field of battle, and were, moreover, in rear of a wing, so that communication with the other (the 2nd Army) required far too much time. Now the head-quarters certainly came up into the sphere of action, but the disadvantage with regard to the communication with the 2nd Army still continued, since even now they were too far distant from Prince Frederic Charles. Even though this was not especially felt, as regards the leading of the 2nd Army, owing to the activity and the initiative of Prince Frederic Charles and the Crown Prince Albert, yet, owing to the great distance of the head-quarters, there was, up to the end of the battle, more or less uncertainty with respect to the progress of the action of the 2nd Army, and as to what they had succeeded in doing; that is to say, the reports of the 2nd Army had too far to come,

and thus arrived later than they would had the head-quarters been placed more in the centre. So long as it was possible to believe that the enemy would be met in the direction between Rezonville and Ville-sur-Yron, that is to say to the north, there was something to say in favour of Flavigny as their position; but this was not the case after the issue of the order for attack (at 10.30 a.m.), and after the opening of the battle their position was a real fault. No one, therefore, ever endeavours to give a reason for the selection of the position! When at last the head-quarters moved forward from Flavigny to Malmaison, it was in every respect too late as regards the guidance of the battle.

The head-quarters concluded from the report of Lieut.-Colonel von Brandenstein, and from the fire which was audible to the north, that the battle was progressing in that direction. Considering this, and also what they saw going on before them, it appeared that the moment had come for the intended simultaneous attack, and that under the circumstances all that was needed was simply the issue of instructions to this effect to the 1st Army. But whilst the 2nd Army was striving energetically to place itself in a favourable position to deal a heavy blow, and had made all preparations for this purpose, so that all that was required was sufficient time to reap the results, the 1st Army was by no means in such a position, but had, on the contrary, neglected everything suitable to the spirit of the order for attack. Though it was not the duty of the head-quarters to interfere without reason in the sphere of command of the commanders of the units under them, yet we may very well urge that, if the head-quarters, as might have been quite possible, had been at Malmaison at 1.30 p.m., and had from that point observed what was going on, the battle might on the German right have run another and a better course. The ideas which governed the events of 3 p.m. and later would certainly have found no favour with the head-quarters, and the attempts to carry out those ideas would therefore have undoubtedly been prevented. The fact that the head-quarters did not arrive in good time upon the field of battle was severely punished even when they did at last arrive, and later on was punished yet more. What were the causes of the late arrival of the head-quarters, and of the unsuitable selection made of their position, is quite unknown; many things happen in war, which afterwards no one could believe to be possible, and for which, search as we may, we can find no explanation. This fault, with regard to the position of the supreme commander during these hours, is one of such things. Indeed, the strategical idea of the order of attack, and the intention that the attacks should be simultaneous, demanded the greatest care in the selection of the best position for the head-quarters, and also that this position should be taken up as early as possible.

Count von Wartensleben gave the King of Prussia at Malmaison a clearer idea of the previous events which had taken place with the 1st Army than could be obtained from the various reports of General von Steinmetz. Soon after 5 p.m. it was observed from Malmaison that the severity of the enemy's infantry fire was diminishing, while their artillery was at times altogether silent. But it was correctly concluded that this was a sign merely of flagging energy, and by no



means one of a tactical victory, and it therefore resulted that the King of Prussia now decided on a simultaneous attack, and took steps to this end.

But an attack by large masses requires certain preparations, such as suitable arrangements, points for the posting and concentration of the troops, reconnaissances, and (in order that the attacking troops may be generally correctly employed) roads and communications for their advance and extension, together with a distinct decision as to the object of the attack. This is the more necessary when one army is to attack simultaneously with another, and under such circumstances as regards nature and art as were here experienced by the 1st Army, and were already exactly known to them.

But, although General von Steinmetz was aware of the order of attack of 10.30 a.m., and although the efforts and attempts made through the defile of Gravelotte against Point du Jour had up to 5 p.m. one and all failed, yet afterwards, as before, he clung persistently to these roads and directions of attack. It is impossible to attack simultaneously by only one road. This is simply in accordance with the nature of things, especially when this one road is a defile which is under the fire of the enemy. But if General von Steinmetz was to attack simultaneously with the 2nd Army, it was obviously necessary that his own army should attack simultaneously throughout. But from noon to 5 p.m. nothing of the kind happened, for nothing was looked to or cared for beforehand with this object. Many lines of attack (roads) are necessary for a simultaneous attack, and if such an attack is to be carried out—especially if on the front and the flank, as was the case here—and there are no roads for its development, they must be made. Neither General von Steinmetz, nor, it would appear, any one else, thought of this, otherwise all that has been described in Chapter V. might have been carried out both in the front and on the flank without difficulty, and might have been completed by 5 p.m.; while if the troops had been at this hour suitably posted at the tactical points, Moltke's simultaneous attack might have been brought about, and successfully executed—at least by the 1st Army.

General von Steinmetz had, still after 5 p.m., the following infantry immediately at his disposal:—

1. Four battalions of the 32nd Infantry Brigade of the 8th Corps, to the west of Gravelotte.

2. Ten and a half battalions of the 25th, 27th, and 28th Brigades of the 7th Corps, to the east and south of Gravelotte.

If at this hour there had been any thought taken as to how to break through the enemy, these ten and a half battalions might have been set in action in the direction of the quarries of Rozerieulles. But no one understood either how to make use of the ground, or how to collect the troops together in good time, and to place them in readiness at the proper points. Everything after, as well as before, that hour remained indistinct as to its aims, and without order as to the means; no fire-position was established for the infantry, and no lines of communication to it were made for the troops told off for the attack. Nothing could therefore be carried out as a whole, since no one had



beforehand either thought or acted logically. It is true that the German artillery, after, as well as before, 5 p.m., produced good effect upon the enemy's position; but no artillery can drive away good infantry by their fire. This task calls for the full force of good infantry.

To such leading, which had shown itself so entirely unequal to its task, destiny decreed that the 2nd Corps should be handed over, though in such hands it could not meet with any other fate than that which the other troops had already endured. It is very doubtful whether at this hour the head-quarters had really any idea of the omissions of General von Steinmetz, or had any complete conception of the failure of his measures, or any certain knowledge of the dispersion of the 7th Corps, or, above all, had any notion that General von Steinmetz had practically done nothing, attempted nothing, and prepared nothing for an attack from the Bois de Vaux.

The 2nd  
Corps  
under the  
orders of  
General  
von  
Steinmetz.

At 5.30 p.m. (?) the king ordered General von Franzecky to place himself with the 2nd Corps under the orders of General von Steinmetz at Gravelotte. Of his corps, at the time of the receipt of the order, the 3rd Division, coming from Buxières, and consisting of eleven battalions, four batteries, and two companies of pioneers, was assembled at Rezonville; at the same place, on their way from Buxières and Onville, were six batteries, one battalion, and four squadrons, while the point of the 4th Division, which was also on the march from Onville, and was composed of twelve battalions, four batteries, four squadrons, and one company of pioneers, was just entering Rezonville. At 5.45 p.m. (?) General von Franzecky moved off the 3rd Division from the south of Rezonville, and the corps artillery from the north of that village towards Gravelotte; while at 6.30 p.m. the 4th Division followed in the same direction. This seems to me to be too late, and my inquiries have convinced me that there must be here some important error as regards time. It is probable that the order was sent to General von Franzecky exactly at 5 p.m., in which case the other times would fit in, since it was four good kilometres from the rendezvous at Rezonville to Gravelotte. Halfway between the two villages the troops were deployed, and from that point they advanced, with colours flying, and on the front of a brigade, over the open, clear, and level plateau.

The 32nd  
Brigade  
come into  
action.

When these reinforcements drew near Gravelotte, General von Goeben directed the four available battalions of the 32nd Brigade (viz. the three battalions of the 72nd and the 2nd Battalion of the 40th) towards the Mance Valley, while he had already ordered the 3rd Battalion of the 40th to the fork of the valley and the 1st Battalion to Malmaison to cover the left flank. As the 32nd Brigade moved off, General von Goeben received from General von Steinmetz orders to carry out the measures which he had already directed. General von Goeben at once rode off to St. Hubert, and passing along the edges of the wood to the north of the main road, formed the opinion that the whole position on both sides of St. Hubert was sufficiently secure. At St. Hubert the general shook hands with Captain Gnügge (of the 3rd Light Battery), encouraged him in his intention to hold his ground, even after Hasse's Battery had been driven back, and informed

him that from his position he had been able to see the effect of the two batteries on Moscou, and that he might continue to fire with the same success. St. Hubert itself was sufficiently strongly held, and a certain amount of order existed in the farm. But this was not the case to the west of it. At this point, on both sides of the main road, stood detachments of the strength of regiments made up from the most varied units, and crowded in close masses, in which it was difficult to introduce any form of order, since the enemy's shot were continually cutting lanes through them.

The case was not very different at other points yet farther to the west. General von Goeben could not himself attend to the organization of these men, but he sent orders to various officers to rally them and to lead them back into the front of battle. He then returned to Gravelotte. The rallying of the men unfortunately was scarcely carried out at all, since there were not a sufficient number of officers to do it. Consequently, the field of battle at this point, after, as well as before, this hour, presented a by no means pleasant appearance, which was not without its effect upon the troops which came up later. Fugitives were continually drifting into the woods, and thence to the rear; or else they cowered in the valley behind any little patches of cover, which might serve to shelter them from the eyes of the officers and from bullets. This flow of fugitives did not cease until late in the evening, since fifty-nine companies were jumbled together in and around St. Hubert, and served, as it were, as a reservoir, from which the men dropped out as the hours ran by.

In the mean time, the 3rd Division and the corps artillery of the 2nd Corps had, at 6.30 p.m., arrived to the west of Gravelotte, and the king at once gave General von Steinmetz the order "to move all available forces against the heights of Point du Jour." It was 6.45 p.m. before General von Steinmetz had issued instructions in this sense to Generals von Zastrow and von Franzecky, and the enemy's lines were then again in movement with the object of striking another blow.

Order for  
the attack  
on Point  
du Jour.

On the side of the enemy, during almost two hours, the battle had been only sufficiently fed to prevent it from dying away; as to the rest, everything was prepared for a last great stroke. The fire-positions on the line from Moscou to Point du Jour were re-occupied, reserves were distributed to each brigade, the firing-lines were supplied with fresh ammunition, and the reserves were posted at suitable points. The artillery, who knew the exact range, were ready to advance into their positions with loaded guns, and at about 6.30 p.m. the enemy's front, as if by a signal, was shrouded in fire and smoke. Why was this? The nearly flat ground from Rezonville to Gravelotte was then quite unoccupied. If one stood on the highest point near Point du Jour (1102), and looked towards Gravelotte, it was possible to see about halfway a slight cavity (924), which towards the west rose up to 960. Considering the distance, which was nearly  $4\frac{1}{2}$  miles, this was a very small difference of height. In this direction there was a German corps on the march, of which the 3rd Division and the corps artillery, now halfway towards Gravelotte, could be

Attack of  
the French.

easily seen by the French to be advancing on a deployed front and with colours flying. They were the more visible, since, as Marshal Leboeuf has frequently assured me, the mass of helmets glowed in the rays of the setting sun (it was between 6 and 7 p.m.), and this over the whole distance between Gravelotte and Rezonville. None of the French generals were able to rightly estimate the number of this imposing and majestic field of helmets as it moved forward. It was thought to be "a reserve army under the King of Prussia," and was considered to consist of at least two corps; others estimated the mass at three corps. (This is intelligible at the present day, since we now know that the 2nd Corps was formed in three groups.) The French felt themselves no longer capable of dealing with such masses; from this moment, therefore, they had no longer any idea "of winning a battle," but thought only of getting out of "the affair with honour," while for this no other means was available than to gain time, which might be best done by a counter-attack! Generals Leboeuf and Frossard agreed in this opinion, and determined to attack the advancing mass of the reserve army from Moscou and Point du Jour, and to attack them at the moment when they should extend out of the Mance Valley, and in this effort to employ the last forces at their disposal. It will be seen from the manner in which this attack was carried out how difficult such an offensive is for the defenders, for, as a matter of fact, no simultaneous attack was carried out from Moscou and Point du Jour, since it took place only from the latter, and was then far too early; indeed, it would appear that Leboeuf held back altogether from the offensive, as he had not got his troops in readiness when Frossard burst forth, while, by the time that Leboeuf was ready, Frossard's attack had been broken up, with the result that Leboeuf, very wisely, entirely gave up his movement. Thus the French offensive took place earlier than was intended, and with probably only one-half of the force which it had been proposed to use. This fact makes it quite clear why no attack whatever was made upon St. Hubert. Nevertheless, this attack was the most energetic of the day, and its effect was proportionately great. It was carried out, not only by the troops of Bastoul's Division, but also by those of Vergé's Division, and the advance was as well managed as it was swift. To the south of the main road, and between 200 and 300 yards from the first French shelter-trenches, lay various bodies of troops of the 7th and 8th Corps in irregular masses and groups; these kept up a rather feeble fire fight, and no longer expected any attack by the enemy. If all these German detachments between the south side of the main road and the level of the gravel-pits were added together, they would at the most amount to twelve companies, which were mixed and jumbled together, and were for the most part without leaders. On the edges of the wood to the south of the main road were, it is true, other detachments; these were, however, in little better condition, and were also, as a rule, without leaders. The hot fire of the French artillery and infantry, which had suddenly begun again, made a strong moral impression upon the groups of German skirmishers; while, before they had become accustomed to this new

phase of the struggle, swarms of the enemy's skirmishers poured out of the smoke along the whole front from Point du Jour to the quarries of Rozerieulles, followed at a short distance by columns distributed at fairly regular intervals. As these troops came on down the slope at a run, and in excellent order, the rear lines of the French infantry suddenly ceased firing, and in place of the roar of their rifles the sound of bugles and of drums, and shouts of "*en avant*" and "*courage*" rang through the air along the entire line. Rushing on with the velocity of a ball bounding down a hill, the French infantry very quickly reached the German skirmishers, who, owing to the little fight left in them, and to the fact that they were surprised, were swept away along the whole line.

The drama could be watched with the naked eye from the heights of Gravelotte, and those so watching it thought that the French attack had reached the eastern edge of the wood, and was pushing on through the latter on Gravelotte. The rapidity with which the event had taken place, the thick cloud of smoke which had preceded it, and the equally thick cloud of dust which followed it through the twilight, together with the confusion, which had been first observed at St. Hubert around Gnügge's Battery, when everything was so enwrapped in a mist of smoke and dust that nothing could be seen but shapeless masses, from which individual atoms were torn away to the rear; all these, together with the fact that the fire of the battery was becoming weaker, brought about for one moment a feeling of distress upon the heights of Gravelotte. Most people thought that Gnügge's Battery would be captured, and they were uncertain whether the guns were moving forwards or back, or were remaining motionless. After a few minutes had been passed in this state of excitement, the cloud of smoke and dust lifted a little, and it was then seen that Gnügge's Battery was firing with three guns on their old front towards Moscou, while three had been pushed about 100 paces to the south, and had now taken up a front directly against Point du Jour; all the six guns were in action, but in the confusion some of the gunners were missing, so that only three guns were still firing, until Captain Gnügge obtained some infantry soldiers, who worked the guns very well indeed in the place of the gunners who were wanting. This is a very remarkable circumstance. Captain Gnügge applied that one of these men (named Koch) might receive some mark of distinction, and he was given the Iron Cross. The first panic.

At Gravelotte and Malmaison, where attention was now being paid to the dispositions for a general attack upon Point du Jour, it was not possible to judge with what strength the enemy had attacked. His strength was estimated to be altogether about a division of fresh troops. In neither respect was this estimate correct, though it might have been so. The German artillery had followed the enemy's advance with their fire, and it was noticed that the hostile infantry, owing to the many hits made by the shell, became looser and looser; but it was impossible to say whether the enemy's attack would, or would not, be brought to a standstill to the east of the wood by the fire of the German guns. While this point was still uncertain, swarms



of panic-stricken infantry of all regiments, with white, red, and blue shoulder-straps, burst suddenly, along the whole front to the south of the main road, out of the western edge of the wood, and poured in upon the artillery who were in action. It was impossible at the first moment to distinguish whether this "played-out rubbish" was composed of friends or enemies. Since the men, driven on by fright and terror, having entirely lost their reason and all moral power, were rushing along and yelling as they went, it was quite possible that they might be French assailants. There was, therefore, great anxiety in the line of the artillery of the 7th Corps; many eyes were turned to the rear on the 2nd Corps, and officers promptly sprang to the front from the batteries, in order to ascertain how the situation stood. These saw nothing but masses of German troops who had lost their heads. But, what masses there were of them! Their *morale* was gone, and they listened neither to words of command or to orders. Many artillery officers threatened them with drawn swords, and others shouted to them that they would open upon them with case from their own guns—but nothing had any effect upon them. Under such circumstances the soldier becomes irresponsible for his actions. Since it was impossible to collect this dross into any formation, an effort was made to turn them off behind the artillery; but this, too, failed. Driven on by fright and terror, the fugitives ran in a straight line upon their own guns, and poured through the intervals, for even the strong expostulations of the gunners was unable to bring them to their senses. The mob did not stop until it had arrived in rear of the line of artillery, where they were met by officers of all arms, and of all ranks, from generals to lieutenants. Even the head-quarters and the commander of the 1st Army were not undisturbed by this event. The efforts to bring about a counterstroke were redoubled; but, as ever, neglected preparations and loss of time cannot in such cases be made good, and one failure necessarily followed another—from the past negligence was born the present rashness!

As a matter of fact, the French infantry which attacked consisted of only about a brigade; moreover, they never got as far as the eastern edge of the wood, but, as was shown by the bodies, were brought to a standstill about 150 yards short of it, and then rushed back in irregular flight into the main position. It was impossible for the Germans to know this at the time, nor could they then know that the might of the enemy's attack had already given way before the German artillery fire alone; all that could be clearly seen was that no attack was made from Moscou, and that St. Hubert had not been lost.

Attack of  
the 32nd  
Infantry  
Brigade.

It has already been stated that General von Goeben had, soon after 6 p.m., set in motion the 32nd Infantry Brigade towards the Mance Valley. Of this brigade, two battalions of the 40th had already entered the battle in a northerly direction, and the remaining four battalions, the 72nd Regiment leading, with the 2nd Battalion of the 40th in rear of it, had moved forward along the main road and reached the quarries of St. Hubert at the very moment when the French attack which has just been described had reached its climax.



Was General von Goeben right, at 6 p.m., when no attack by the enemy on his front was visible, in allowing four fresh battalions to go into action in the direction of St. Hubert?

Considering the situation of the battle, we must, under the circumstances, answer the question in the negative. At the hour named there were in and around St. Hubert forty-three companies. Goeben could not have had any exact knowledge of this, but he did know that the greater part of the infantry of his corps were huddled together at that spot. If he had known the true state of affairs, it would have been better to have taken thirty companies away from St. Hubert, in order to use them somewhere else, than to have sent sixteen fresh companies there; for it must have been possible to hold the position with thirteen companies. The other thirty companies would have been welcome, especially to the north of the main road. But in war one never knows exactly that which one ought to know, and, although it is impossible to find a reason for using the 32nd Brigade in the direction which has been mentioned, its presence there proved in the highest degree effective. General von Barnekow (the commander of the 16th Division), who was in front of the four battalions, was just the right man to carry out the task, which called more for decision and action than for great ability. The four battalions were no more successful than their predecessors in obtaining a suitable tactical development and grouping—for this no leader seems to have been able to allow time—but their attack with drums beating was in no way inferior in energy to that of the French; detachments of various troops which found themselves to the right and left of the fresh column clung to it, and the French onset now stopped entirely, and their lines turned and fled back in disorder. It appeared from St. Hubert as if General von Barnekow might really have carried Point du Jour by storm from the front. The garrison of the former farm, whom the French had squeezed past, eagerly followed the advance of the four battalions, but a little in front of the height 1076 a regular hail of bullets struck the latter; they stopped, and this attack also, which had begun so hopefully, failed altogether. This was the first time, during all these long hours, that several battalions had been used simultaneously against the enemy, and it was the first important attack of infantry upon Point du Jour. Though General von Barnekow had not been successful, yet he had completely re-established the battle, and on this particular day that was much to be thankful for. During the attack of General von Barnekow, Gnügge's Battery had for the first time to cease firing, in order not to endanger their own infantry.

But Goeben's action must be examined from yet another point of view. The 32nd Brigade, as we have seen, carried out an important duty, but this was due to sheer good luck; Goeben had neither known of it beforehand nor wished to do it, nor had he intended anything of the kind. When Goeben sent the 32nd Brigade into action, he gave up his command over his last infantry reserve. For this he is not to be blamed, since he knew that the infantry of a whole corps would come up in their place. But the question is, whether the 32nd Brigade, considered as a reserve, was posted at

the correct tactical spot? And to this we must answer, No! No real danger threatened the 8th Corps, except from the 3rd French Corps from the Bois des Génivaux and from the direction of La Folie-Leipzig; and its mass of artillery might have been swept away by the fire from there, if Marshal Leboeuf had been a tactician. By good luck, nothing of the kind took place; but we ought always to take account of the normal order of things. The battle of Gravelotte consisted of two battles: (1) That of Gravelotte; (2) that of St. Privat. The chain of the German connection in the centre between these two was very loose, and exactly opposite to the faulty spot stood Marshal Leboeuf, with at the beginning four massed divisions, with the reserve of the army available near at hand up to 3 p.m., and after 3 p.m. with one brigade of that reserve at his disposal, and another ready to support him. Even though General von Goeben knew nothing of this at the time, yet he could have no doubt with regard to the weak centre. His reserve ought, therefore, to have been posted near Malmaison, in the vicinity of the height 977, and should have remained there in readiness to meet an offensive stroke by the enemy; at any rate, this should have been the case until the German 3rd Corps had deployed in rear of the 9th. Even then such a reserve would not have been superfluous in that position, while it would have been more favourably situated for the support of the 15th Division in the direction of Moscou.

It has been said, and I have myself so written, that Leboeuf had already by midday brought his last reserves into action. But this must not be taken to mean that the whole of his infantry had actually been extended as skirmishers, and were thus held fast by the Germans. This was not the case at all. Leboeuf had really made the great mistake of letting all his four divisions get out of hand, without arranging for any reserve for himself. This he first obtained from the 1st Brigade of the Voltigeurs of the Guard (at 3 p.m.), and even from this force he sent one regiment into action without any special reason. But if Leboeuf himself had no reserve, or only a very weak one, all his divisions, with the exception of Aymard's, had comparatively strong reserves up to the end of the battle. It would therefore have been easy for the marshal to collect at any hour infantry up to the strength of a division, and to use them for a decisive attack by breaking through the German centre. The best proof of this fact is to be found in the small losses suffered by a large number of regiments, always excepting Aymard's Division. We may be quite sure that it was not owing to our tactics, or to our display of force, that nothing unpleasant took place from La Folie-Leipzig; for that we have to thank the foolish action of all the generals of the French 3rd Corps. The 32nd Brigade ought therefore to have been on the height 977, where Goeben should have left it until the 3rd Corps was in a position to take over that post. But this was not the case until 7 p.m.

Advance of  
the 9th  
Hussars.

The 32nd Brigade was followed by the 9th Hussars (belonging to the 16th Division). General von Goeben had given no order for this advance. That much is certain; but it is uncertain whether such an

order was given by General von Barnekow, or whether the regiment on its own initiative followed the last brigade of its division. Inquiries into this matter have given no distinct result; the question, therefore, remains open. But, since the consequences of this event might have been very grievous, its tactical side, about which, unfortunately, nothing has been said, must now be placed in the proper light. The 9th Hussars had followed the main road in column of threes, had passed the Mance Valley in this formation, and had halted in the same formation to the west of St. Hubert. It thus pushed an entire cavalry regiment among the already close walls of infantry which stood there. When the hussars halted at this spot, General von Barnekow had already stopped the enemy's attack, and had commenced his counter-attack, which was at first successful, so that the cavalry did not suffer at all from the French offensive. Nevertheless, such a hot infantry fire fell upon them that the commander of the regiment allowed his men to dismount at the moment when the tail of the column had reached about the middle of the strip of wood to the east of the ravine. There can be no doubt that this was the very worst thing that could have been done under the circumstances.

The succession of misfortunes seemed on this day and at this place to have no end; for, while the hussars were halted in the above manner on the main road, the reservists of the regiment (which, as is well known, had left Trèves without them) came up mounted on the horses which had been added on mobilization, and the commander of the regiment, instead of sending them back at once, formed from them a fifth squadron, which he placed at the tail of the other four. This fifth squadron was, under the circumstances, a very undesirable addition, since the horses were not trained to stand fire, and were nervous and excited, and, in fact, were unbroken. When the attack of General von Barnekow had been brought to a standstill, the enemy's fire increased in intensity, the hussars saw their infantry retiring, and the commander therefore gave the order to mount, intending to draw the regiment back a little. The trumpet-call "Threes about—march!" was correctly obeyed by all the squadrons, as was also the call "Front!" The squadron with the reserve horses, however, misunderstood both calls, and retired at first at a trot, after which the pace grew faster and faster, as the untrained horses grew frightened at the clatter in the defile through the wood, and rushed swiftly through it. As if this was not enough, this fifth squadron carried with it half of the fourth. Shot crashing into them, and impediments of all kinds, increased the difficulties of the situation, until at length, to the astonishment of all observers at Gravelotte, a mass of cavalry burst at the top of their speed out of the western entrance of the wood! For the first moment every one was stupefied with terror. The event excited the greater apprehension at Gravelotte, because, as has been stated, there had already been a similar panic to the south of the main road. But since rushing quadrupeds are swifter than rushing bipeds, and do not lose their breath so quickly, the maddened horses dashed over the flat on the main road

The second  
panic.

into the remnants of the infantry of different regiments (principally of the 60th and 33rd) which had been there collected. But worse was yet to come. On the right-hand side of the main road were waggons of all kinds and led horses, which had up to this time been in the best possible order, so that the whole of the left side of the road had been quite unencumbered. The teams of these waggons, startled by the rush of the hussars, turned about and crowded into mixed masses. Nothing was of any use, though many officers rushed with drawn swords among the wild masses of men and horses, and endeavoured to stem the raging flood; hussars, infantry of various units, led horses and orderlies, with baggage and other waggons, were all jumbled up together, and rushed tumultuously along the road to the rear. The confusion was indescribable, and the head-quarters and the staff of the 1st Army angrily watched the hateful scene. The advancing 2nd Corps, magnificent as was its appearance, could not efface the terrible sight. No one could find out any cause for the panic, and every one was boiling with excitement for no reason whatever. Horses and men had lost their senses, sabre-cuts and curses rained upon the idiots without effect, and it was not until the lungs of both horses and men gave out that the wild flood was brought to a standstill, and could be collected together far in rear of the 2nd Corps. Many of the fugitives did not stop until they got to Vionville and its neighbourhood, shouting everywhere "We are beaten!" In this manner some officers lost their led horses, and never found them again; among others, three of the 9th Hussars.

The other three and a half squadrons remained near St. Hubert up to the end of the battle. When General von Barnekow saw that his attack had failed, he ordered Captain von Ihlenfeld to charge. The squadron galloped by the right of St. Hubert, wheeled by sections to the left, but "saw nothing to charge, but only their own infantry retiring, followed by hostile skirmishers." They wheeled again by sections to the right, in order to make room for the infantry, and took up a position to the south of the main road and about 150 yards in front of the eastern edge of the wood. The remaining two and a half squadrons continued in threes on the main road, while Captain von Ihlenfeld's squadron (the 1st), after about half an hour, placed itself in rear of the 39th, whose field of fire it had masked up to that time, and remained until 10 p.m. in a clearing of the wood. Every soldier ought to know of such cases as this, in order that he may not judge incorrectly the behaviour of other troops, and may understand the causes of a panic, about which there is no reason to keep silence, since they are very natural and, in this case, very instructive.

The fact that the head-quarters had witnessed this panic could only strengthen and support the opinion as to the necessity for a strong counter-attack with fresh troops.

#### D. *Up to the End of the Battle.*

The orders  
of the king  
to General

The first order of the king to the 2nd Corps "for the march on Gravelotte," was correct under all circumstances. The second order



of the king, "to attack Point du Jour with all available forces," may be judged differently as regards its correctness. If suitable preparations had been made for carrying it out, and if the attack had been directed concentrically on Point du Jour, it must have succeeded with the forces available; but the main attack should have been made on the right against the enemy's left flank, and not on his front. In order rightly to judge of the matter, we must first remember the request made by General von Steinmetz to the head-quarters at 4.15 p.m., in which the general, who had convinced himself of the uselessness of an attack in front, begged that the 2nd Army might "be instructed to combine against the enemy's right flank." Thus, at 6.30 p.m., that is to say, after an interval of two and a quarter hours, the head-quarters distinctly disregarded the recommendation made by General von Steinmetz at 4.15 p.m., with regard to the direction of attack; since an order was then given to do that which General von Steinmetz had recognized as impossible, and had reported as such. Had Steinmetz then brought forward his objections to this course, as he should have done, or had he omitted to do so?

It would appear that Steinmetz did not do so, and it is easy to explain this. For, when the head-quarters came up in rear of the 1st Army, General von Steinmetz went to the king and made a report to him concerning the state of affairs. The meeting of the king and the general took place at too great a distance from their staffs for the latter to be able to know what the king said to the general; but the witnesses judged from the forcible gestures of the king, and from the seriousness of his face when Steinmetz left him, that the king had expressed to the general his disapprobation of the steps which he had taken up to that time, especially with regard to the prematurely engaged attack of the 1st Army—and this was the case. From this moment a yet more marked ill-humour took possession of General von Steinmetz, and it would seem that he was now no longer inclined to seek the presence of the king, or to express to him his opinions on this matter. From that moment the general simply carried out what he was ordered to do. Although Steinmetz no doubt was not blamed on account of having attacked, but because he had attacked prematurely, yet there was a peculiar fatality in the fact that he was now ordered to attack in the very direction which he had recognized as objectionable. There is no need to inquire more exactly as to how far the blame attached to General von Steinmetz was well founded; but it is easy to understand that even the king had at last realized the unpleasant state of affairs which had up to then existed in the head-quarters, owing to the many differences between Steinmetz and Moltke, and his Majesty could at such moments speak very plainly.

But though General von Steinmetz—situated as he was—raised no objections against the second order, these objections were raised in another quarter, namely, by General von Moltke.

After the second order of the king had been issued, and its execution had begun, those near the king could see that the 2nd Corps was moving in an unsuitable direction (towards the front). It had

von  
Steinmetz  
and the  
2nd Corps.

Moltke's  
objections  
and advice.



first to change again into column of march, had in this formation to pass the defile in the twilight, and had on the farther side to extend for the attack under yet more unfavourable conditions than had been the case with the troops which had already been engaged here, namely, as regards time, in the twilight and darkness on ground covered with every kind of obstacle, and, with respect to support by fire, in all probability without any assistance from the German artillery; and the consequences of the order which had been given became so clear to Moltke's eyes that he brought forward strong objections both against the suitability of the attack generally, and with respect also to the direction of the attack. Moltke had already distinctly ordered, at 10.30 a.m., that the attack should be made from Gravelotte and the Bois de Vaux. Since he had been near Malmaison (from 5 p.m.), he had observed that sufficient had not been done against the enemy's left flank from the Bois de Vaux, and had also in the mean time learnt the events which have been narrated more clearly than he had previously been able to ascertain them from the reports of General von Steinmetz. He had, since 5 p.m., himself seen and himself remarked that General von Steinmetz did not understand him, and that the measures of the latter in no way corresponded to the distinct idea of the order for the attack. Moltke was unpleasantly disturbed by this; yet in this very difficult situation he entirely preserved his quiet manner with his subordinates, and his peculiarly careful modesty towards the king. He now observed the panic which has been described above, while the 32nd Infantry Brigade was already in motion in the direction of the defile towards St. Hubert, and the 3rd Division was preparing to follow them. There would still have been time to stop the 3rd Division, or to give them another direction; even if the attack by the French should really result in the loss of the wood, which was very improbable, there were collected at Gravelotte fresh forces of such great numerical strength, that the enemy could and must be destroyed in the Mance Valley by their counter-attack, without our having been in any way in an unfavourable tactical situation.

The continued, even though irregular and slow, fire of Gnügge's Battery was a sign to Moltke that the enemy's attack had had no great result; and, moreover, he credited the artillery line at Gravelotte with sufficient fighting power to be able alone to successfully defend itself if necessary. If, nevertheless, the 2nd Corps were pushed forward in the twilight through the defile, without any sufficient preparation and without any support from the Bois de Vaux, Moltke foresaw that success was impossible. The distance and the dispersion of the infantry of the 7th Corps proved to Moltke, at 7 p.m., that nothing could be carried out by them from the Bois de Vaux. Had he in the mean time learnt that the 26th Infantry Brigade (the only one which was concentrated) had not received its first order to work against the enemy's left flank until 3 p.m., though he had at 10.30 a.m. ordered beforehand the attack from the Bois de Vaux? Under these circumstances nothing but a new frontal attack could be carried out against Point du Jour, unless it was decided to give up anything

of the kind, and at least to move the 3rd Division in the direction of the Mance mill. Though Moltke strongly supported his opinion, yet the king did not accept his advice, but shortly and firmly insisted that his ideas should be carried out, and gave an order to that effect to General von Steinmetz, to whom, however, he left the decision as to the manner of the advance.

Owing to the advanced hour, there was a strong desire to bring about a decision after so much toil. This was quite intelligible, and there was also considerable reason to believe that the strength of the enemy had been reduced. We cannot, therefore, theoretically speaking, at once disapprove of the king's idea; but care should certainly have been taken to give the attack the best direction and the best formation. If Moltke, nevertheless, raised objections against the king's intentions, the reasons which he assigned appear very much to the point; and if we compare Moltke's order for the battle of 10.30 a.m. with the king's order for the attack of which we are speaking, we shall find little harmony between them; for Moltke expressly laid down the lines by which the attack was to be delivered, while the king left these undecided. If we further consider what reports and information had up to this hour been received by Moltke, what he had himself seen since 5 p.m., and the direction which the attack actually took, the discord of opinion between Moltke and the king appears very probable on these various grounds.

The expectations which Moltke was justified in forming with regard to the 7th Corps were not fulfilled, the manner of the frontal attack of the 2nd Corps did not meet with his approbation, and finally the systematic offensive came to an end without having brought about the desired decision. The field-marshal speaks as follows with regard to this important matter:—

“At this moment King William had ridden forward with his staff to the height to the south of Malmaison. But even thence it was impossible to see how events were progressing on the left flank of the army, which was more than four miles distant. The fire of the French artillery along the whole front from La Folie to Point du Jour had almost ceased, whilst the roar of guns was increasing to the northward. It was past 6 p.m., the day was drawing to an end, and a decision must be brought about. The king therefore ordered a renewed advance of the 1st Army, and with this object placed the 2nd Corps, which was just coming up after a long march, under General von Steinmetz for the purpose of bringing it about.

“In consequence of this, those battalions of the 7th Corps which were still available, after keeping back a reserve of five, were once more pushed forward across the Mance Valley. The battalions which were posted in the Bois de Vaux closed in to these in the direction of Point du Jour and the quarries.

“The division of the Voltigeurs of the Guard was added as a reinforcement to the 2nd French Corps which was thus attacked. The whole of the reserves came up into the foremost line. The artillery redoubled its activity, and an annihilating infantry fire was poured upon the advancing enemy. The French then advanced themselves to the attack in strong swarms of skirmishers, and drove the smaller detachments, which were lying in the open and were without leaders, back to the border of the wood.

"But this attack was here checked, while there was still the strength of a fresh army-corps available.

"Having been the last of all to be despatched by rail to the theatre of war, the 2nd Corps had followed the movement in advance by forced marches, without, up to the present time, having been able to take part in any of the actions. Having started at 2 p.m. from Pont à Mousson, the corps, marching by Buxières and Rezonville, had arrived by the evening at the south of Gravelotte. The wish of the Pomeranians to get at the enemy that very day was loudly expressed.

*"It would have been better if the chief of the staff of the army, who was present on the spot, had not allowed this advance to take place at so late an hour of the evening. A nucleus of troops which was altogether intact might have been most desirable on the following day, but could scarcely on this evening bring about a decisive change."*

"Hurrying forward through Gravelotte, the leading battalions of the corps pushed to the front as far as the stone bridge, and to within a few hundred paces of Point du Jour. Those which followed soon found themselves in the press of the detachments which were standing under fire to the south of St. Hubert, and their further advance against Moscou came to an end. Owing to the darkness which had come on it was impossible to distinguish between friend and foe, and the fire necessarily ceased. It did not finally end until 10 p.m.

"It was certainly fortunate that the fresher 2nd Corps formed the front fighting-line for the night, and that the much mixed detachments of the 7th and 8th Corps could again assemble in rear of it."

Although the first part of this quotation, as far as "available," refers to the events which I have already described, I have inserted the whole of the description, in order to render possible a survey of the connection of events. The words, "keeping back a reserve of five," are directed against General von Zastrow; "the wish of the Pomeranians to get at the enemy that very day" offers some sort of reason for the tactical mistake, and the assembly of the 7th and 8th Corps in rear of the fresher 2nd sets the evil results of the entire handling of the troops under a favourable light. Moreover, it is an error to say that the whole division of the Voltigeurs of the Guard "were added as a reinforcement." Of this division there was, since 3 p.m., only one brigade on the spot, and that was at Moscou, and not at Point du Jour, while the second brigade remained near Marshal Bazaine. But the sentence which is in italics, with regard to its general sense, entirely corresponds with Moltke's idea on the 18th of August and with my narrative; it is, however, at its close inconsistent with my statement, since Moltke's word, "allowed," leaves no doubt that he thus wishes to express that he had no objection to make against the spirit of the second order and the bringing into action of the 2nd Corps. The question as to the direction of the attack Moltke leaves quite unmentioned, but this must now be here taken into account.

The sentence in italics at first puzzled me very much, and I was already thinking of altering my statement, when I received fresh corroboration of it from a quarter from which I had up till then not asked for information. In this I found not only a complete agreement with what I had formerly related in accordance with the reports made

to me by eye-witnesses, but also the following fact :—When Moltke saw that no attention was paid to his advice, and when the king's idea had become an order, and the 2nd Corps were marching towards the defile, he slowly turned away from the king, moved about one hundred paces to the right, and pretended to be busy about something. He intended to thus give it to be understood that he did not approve of what was coming, and those around who saw this action so understood it; indeed, the scene made a great impression upon them. When, later on, the point of the 2nd Corps was approaching the western edge of the wood, Moltke followed it for a few paces along the main road, and a number of staff officers came up to him, while the king, with Bismarck, Roon, and Podbielski, remained near Malmaison. The head-quarters were not collected again until it was dark, and even then were not all collected, when Moltke obtained the consent of the king to the cessation of fire.

These are the circumstances as they have been related to me by various persons. Though it was at first somewhat painful to me to give this complete publicity, in opposition to Moltke's statement, yet I said to myself that what I have here related was already perfectly well known among officers, and that, owing to the number of witnesses, the true facts would sooner or later be brought to light. This at once determined me to adhere to my narrative, and I was further confirmed in this by the circumstance that it would have been scarcely possible that Moltke should not have recognized on the spot what was faulty in a step which he afterwards altogether condemned in the above form and at so great a length. It is very improbable that Moltke would so fail, and if it be asked, what could Moltke mean by such words, and why should he take upon himself the responsibility for an act which was done in opposition to his advice, I can explain this to myself by the character, the mode of thought and the feelings of Moltke, since he hoped to thus see an end put to a controversy, without detracting from the services of any one, and with the object of defending his king from all criticism. Moltke's own words harmonize with this opinion :—

“All that is published in a history of a war is invariably coloured by the success which it met with; but patriotism and the love of our country make it a duty not to destroy the amount of prestige which the victories of our armies have conferred upon certain individuals.”

It is thus intelligible that Moltke should decline to say a depreciatory word with regard to General von Steinmetz, who had obtained so much prestige in 1866, and was in this case the enemy of his own fame; similarly, he was careful not to destroy the prestige of William I., while he himself, by his self-criticism, gains as much as a man as he loses as chief of the General Staff. Moreover, what stain could the confession of a failure inflict upon Moltke? Since Moltke really considered so much the prestige of certain personages, we may be astonished at the many places where, following his account, the prestige of the Crown Prince Frederic William and of



Prince Frederic Charles is entirely demolished for those who understand how to read between the lines of Moltke's criticisms.

Execution  
of the order  
of the king  
by General  
von  
Steinmetz.

General von Steinmetz had received an order "to set in movement all available strength against the heights of Point du Jour." How and by what roads the general was to carry out this duty was left to his discretion; thus "how" it was carried out may be attributed to him!

In the mean time the troops of the 2nd and 7th Corps had remained in movement against Point du Jour, for General von Steinmetz, at about 6.45 p.m., had ordered—

1. General von Zastrow: "To lead those battalions of the 7th Corps which were yet on the near side of the wood across the valley of the Mance;" whether from the west against the front, or from the south-west rather against the enemy's flank, is not known.

2. General von Franzecky: "To advance against the front of Point du Jour, and, in conjunction with those troops of the 7th Corps which were on his right, to capture the enemy's position at all hazards."

The ruins of Point du Jour were to serve as a point of direction for both corps. In the then positions of the infantry of the two corps, it was scarcely possible, owing to the want of time, to make their movements simultaneous, if the infantry of the 7th Corps was to co-operate from somewhere by the Mance mill against the French left flank. Since the direction for the 2nd Corps was now distinctly laid down, General von Zastrow was, to a certain extent, forced on to the road to the Mance mill, otherwise he would perhaps not yet have realized how his infantry ought to be used.

Measures  
of General  
von  
Zastrow.

But since a great part of the infantry of the 7th Corps were now so far away from this point that they would come up too late, and another part seems to have been forgotten altogether, General von Zastrow acted as follows:—

1. The 1st Battalion of the 77th, from its position in the Mance Valley, exactly opposite to the gravel-pits, was to advance against the latter and thence on again to Point du Jour.

2. The three battalions of the 73rd, which were in the neighbourhood of the Mance mill, were also to attack Point du Jour from there. In carrying out this movement this regiment fell in with the 1st and 4th companies of the 13th, which were already on the eastern edge of the Bois de Vaux, opposite to the quarries of Rozerieulles, so that there were here three and a half battalions collected under General von Osten-Sacken. Consequently, General von Zastrow set only four battalions in motion, although General von Steinmetz had expressly ordered that "those battalions of the 7th Corps which were still on the near side of the wood were to be led forward over the valley of the Mance." What was then to form the reserve? The 2nd Corps had taken over this rôle.

General von Zastrow held back:—

1. The 74th Regiment, because it was too far from the roads to the Mance mill, since it stood to the south of the main road and close to it, on the western edge of the wood.



2. The Fusilier Battalion of the 53rd and the 2nd of the 77th, which were to the north-west of the Mance mill.

3. The Fusilier Battalion of the 77th, to the south of Gravelotte as a reserve.

Thus he retained six battalions out of ten. The 2nd and 3rd companies of the 13th clung close to the left of the 73rd. The way by the Mance mill, which was used by the 73rd, was short in comparison with that for the 2nd Corps, and that regiment would, therefore, reach its object of attack earlier than the leading infantry of the 2nd Corps.

Even before General von Franzecky had received the above-mentioned order of General von Steinmetz, he had, as far as lay in his power, informed himself by his own observation as to the situation of affairs. The active little general, with the strong head and his piercing restless eyes, sitting on his historic war-horse, had been a witness of the panic which has been already described, and had, on receiving the order of General von Steinmetz, formed the opinion that the action could not bring about any further unfavourable consequences. It seemed to him to be too late for that. But the general was also too good a tactician to be particularly pleased with the order which he had received. Though he saw that it could not be carried out, he was too well acquainted with the character of General von Steinmetz to expect any success from a remonstrance. He therefore determined to take things as they were. He knew that at this point the troops had over and over again entered the wood (the defile) by brigades, and had moved forward to the attack on the farther side by companies, and that these had been completely broken up. He also knew of the events at this point between 3 and 4 p.m. What had then been demanded from a cavalry division, two infantry divisions, under the pressure of circumstances, had now to carry out. As it already began to grow dark, General von Franzecky had from the first to give up any idea—since the limits within which he was to employ his corps were settled beforehand—of first allowing his infantry to work through the wood to the south of the main road and on a broad front, with a view to re-forming on the farther side, and of then attacking Point du Jour from a wide starting-line. Just as between 3 and 4 p.m. the character of the wood forced the cavalry and artillery masses on to the main road, so now the same effect was produced by the want of knowledge of the troops of the wooded ground, combined with the darkness which was coming on. The effect of this, as regarded the French and Germans, was the same at the beginning, and it turned out the same as the movement went on.

General von Franzecky therefore made the following dispositions :—

1. The infantry, with their tactical units well closed up, were to follow the main road, and the point, after passing the eastern edge of the wood, was immediately to bend off to the south, was to gain ground to the front, and was in this position to await at first the development of the rear echelons, in order, when that was completed, to overwhelm the enemy in a compact mass. It was hoped

Action of  
General  
von  
Franzecky.

that thus, by means of a better military discipline, we should have in our favour all the advantages of a night action; for which there are, even in the present day, many ardent advocates. Everything considered, the leading division (the 3rd) could not be deployed on the farther side and ready for the attack before 8 p.m. The infantry was strictly ordered to remain in close order until the quarries of St. Hubert had been passed, and to keep their formation with all their might; when the quarries had been passed, they were to extend at the double as far as possible to the south.

2. The whole of the cavalry were to remain in rear at Gravelotte.

3. The corps artillery was to halt to the south and west of Gravelotte, and only two batteries and one section were to prolong the artillery line of the 7th Corps to the south.

After the general had issued this order, he went to the western edge of the wood, close to the south of the main road, from which spot he encouraged the troops as they marched past him, and impressed upon them afresh that the preservation of their order must be the basis of success.

General von Franzecky did not then know with certainty whether St. Hubert was occupied by the Germans. If this were the case, it was possible that, before the point reached St. Hubert, the fight might assume a different complexion; in short, the general gave no special instructions with regard to St. Hubert. Attention is drawn to this point, not in order to make the general alone responsible for the unpleasant episodes which took place later, but in order to show why it was that the general was not in a position to give any exact orders.

As has been stated, the head-quarters were at this time convinced that St. Hubert had not been lost, while, as will presently appear, two-thirds of the quarries of Rozerieulles had been captured by detachments of the 33rd, 39th, and 40th, between 6.45 and 7 p.m. This last, and, under the circumstances, most decisive tactical fact was still unfortunately entirely unknown to all the higher commanders. This was due to the fact that in the 1st Army, between the fighting-line of the infantry and the leaders, there really nowhere existed any proper means of communication with the various tactical units; at least there was none between the advanced portions of the 7th and 8th Corps at the Bois de Vaux and the quarries of Rozerieulles, and the superior leaders who were at Gravelotte. Since these localities were, however, the most important, and the battle had already lasted for seven hours, it throws a curious light upon the superior leaders, to find that no attempt was made to continually watch the fight around the quarries of Rozerieulles and their neighbourhood from the eastern and northern edge of the patches of wood, and to do this with observers possessing tactical skill, to whom instructions should have been given to report everything of moment as quickly as possible to the superior leaders. This important step was neglected, and this fact tends to prove that nowhere in the 1st Army or the 7th Corps was the tactical situation rightly appreciated, that nowhere was Moltke's order for the battle of 10.30 a.m. understood, and that no one knew how to take advantage of events.

When General von Franzecky was instructed, at 5.30 p.m., by the head-quarters, to "place his corps at the disposition of the 1st Army at Gravelotte," General von Steinmetz, it is hardly necessary to say, was at once informed. What could the 2nd Corps do? Either attack, or ward off an attack by the enemy! If General von Steinmetz then (at 5.30 p.m.) received no more exact instruction with regard to this point, it was his duty to at once make sufficient preparations, so that the 2nd Corps should be able to fulfil both tasks. If Steinmetz was to act on the defensive, the place in which the 2nd Corps was to be used was obvious; if he was to attack, the 2nd Corps must receive from him, who must have exactly known all the circumstances, such a direction for their advance, that they should be able to move to the attack under the most favourable conditions possible, that is to say, they must at once be sent in that direction in which a tactical success might be anticipated. Whatever this direction might have been, it was certainly not that through the defile of Gravelotte. General von Steinmetz neglected this point, and this was the more faulty since a good hour had passed since the order from the head-quarters to attack Point du Jour. General von Steinmetz ought, therefore, after the receipt of the order to attack, to have given full value to his conviction, which was founded upon experience in this very spot, that a frontal attack had no prospect of success. The proper tactical direction for an attack was then undoubtedly by way of the Mance mill, and the 2nd Corps ought thus certainly to have followed, as regarded the mass of its infantry, the track of the 73rd. One brigade in front would have been more than sufficient. Was this possible?

Reflections  
concerning  
the frontal  
attack.

General von Franzecky had not received from General von Steinmetz any instructions pointing in this direction, but nevertheless had brought up his troops suitably for an attack by the Mance mill. This was not by accident, but by intention; consequently, before the order "to attack Point du Jour" had arrived, the whole of the infantry of the 3rd Division was massed to the south and south-west of Gravelotte, in the direction rather of the line Mance mill-quarries of Rozerieulles than in that of St. Hubert. Not only this, but the 3rd Division, moving from their place of assembly on the Mance mill, would have had to pass only for about two-thirds of the way through a defile, until it had reached the eastern edge of the wood, while between the Mance mill and the quarries the direction was straight, that is to say, the most favourable for the development of the attack. On the other hand, this division, moving from its place of assembly through the defile, and extending against Point du Jour, had to pass through almost a geometrical half-circle, and then had to extend itself from the right far to the south under the enemy's fire. If, on the other hand, the 3rd Division, following the 73rd, marched on the Mance mill, it would move exactly on the diameter of this circle, and this by the shortest and easiest way, as well as by that which was tactically the most favourable for the attack itself, and, moreover, without exposing itself to such a fire from Moscou and Point du Jour as was the case when moving by the defile. On this

last line the troops were in a re-entering angle, and were thus under a cross-fire (and one also by tiers); whereas if they advanced by the Mance mill, they would have been in a salient angle, and would have met with neither a cross-fire, nor any artillery fire, nor fire by tiers, and would, moreover—though this was not known beforehand—have found the quarries of Rozerieulles already in the possession of our troops. If General von Steinmetz now, at about 7 p.m., after all the error and neglect which had taken place since General von Wedell's report, and since General von Zastrow had at last understood the order of 10.30 a.m., and had brought the 73rd into the only suitable direction, was not yet clear upon this point, it must be acknowledged to be a perfect riddle. The fact that the 2nd Corps, owing to the king's order, had been forced into the most unfavourable position for attack which could be imagined, imposed upon General von Steinmetz the duty of making his remonstrances heard; and this the more, inasmuch as General von Franzecky had, by the direction of the deployment of the 3rd Division, already pushed forward the attack in a direction which was tactically the best.

But with regard to this matter there was another point of importance. During all the former attacks against Point du Jour the German artillery had throughout co-operated, and had always energetically continued their fire during the advance of our infantry, since the artillery could in daylight both observe and shoot well. To this fact it is due, for example, that the events which took place between 3 and 4 p.m. did not end in a frightful catastrophe, that the French could not arouse or assemble themselves for thorough action, and that St. Hubert was held throughout. But it could now be foreseen, judging by the hour at which the order of General von Steinmetz reached the Generals von Zastrow and von Franzecky, that it would be dark while the attack was being carried out, and that thus the German artillery must first slacken and finally altogether cease their fire, unless they were prepared to run the risk of hitting the German infantry. For at 8 p.m., at such ranges, all observation was impossible for our artillery, who could not distinguish between French and German infantry, or between the two firing-lines. Just as we had up to this time had in our artillery a sure support and a powerful weapon of offence, so now both of these were wanting; we were obliged to fall back upon the fighting power of our infantry, which the artillery could not support, while on the other hand the enemy's guns could now employ their fire, which had up to this time been able to give no assistance or effect. The tactical conditions were entirely reversed, since the advantages of the superiority in artillery were altogether lost to the Germans, and were on the other hand gained by the French, who thus profited doubly, both by the loss of power of the Germans and by their own improved condition. It might have been easily foreseen that, under such circumstances, an infantry attack in the evening, and made from a defile, would have little chance of success, even if a large and fresh force were employed for it; but in that case, steps ought to have been taken to start the attack and carry it out from the Mance mill.



As has always been laid down, that the advance of the 2nd and 7th Corps ought to have been simultaneous; but, as a matter of fact, it was nothing of the kind, nor was there any sort of unity in their attacks, a matter which it might have been difficult to arrange even under easier circumstances. In the mean time the advanced guard of the 3rd Division (composed of the 2nd Jägers and the 54th Regiment, in all four battalions, of which the former was at the head), had by a direct order from General von Steinmetz been brought from the south of Gravelotte on to the main road at the western edge of the wood. At this spot were then the Generals von Steinmetz, von Moltke, and von Franzecky. As the Jägers moved along the main road the bugles struck up, and these were followed by the drums of the battalions in rear. General von Steinmetz accompanied the column in full assurance of the result, and the even marching of the troops was observed from all sides with admiration; indeed, it made a very marked impression. But the Germans had already at this point once offended the goddess of battle, and she was not to be won over by any means, for this goddess requires not only that men shall die like heroes, but that they shall also think like heroes. All the wooing, which had been offered in such a clumsy way, and without any grace to this the most capricious of all coquettes, was not only refused by the goddess of battle, but she even each time allowed the punishment to follow swiftly upon the act of awkwardness. Why did the troops advance with clanging bands over this road which had been ever since midday consecrated to death? No tactician can understand why! If it was desired to make the enemy's work easier, and to draw his attention to the moment when he ought to open the gates of his hell, the Germans could have thought of no better way of so doing. Not only did they enter a defile, which lay under the fire of the enemy, in close order and under the disadvantages as regards darkness which have been mentioned, but they did this with the greatest possible amount of parade. If the whole of their cartridges had at least been taken away from all this infantry, and they had been ordered simply to march on, it would have been, at any rate—considering what was desired, and the dispositions which had been made—a logical proceeding, and it might also have averted the fatal confusion which was soon after to set in.

During the march General von Franzecky gave the 2nd Jägers the "direction on Point du Jour, with the object of carrying out the main attack by way of St. Hubert." The Jägers extended in accordance with the order—and did it well and quickly—to the south along the eastern border of the wood, with their right extending as far as the gravel-pits. In this position the 39th, whose behaviour had been most excellent, were in front of the Jägers, and when the latter drew forward to within about two hundred yards of Point du Jour, and there lay down and occupied the position, the 39th joined them. The Jägers and the 39th had, therefore, carried out their task with an amount of order worthy of all praise. But this was only one battalion, and the smallest part of the work.

In rear of the Jägers was the 54th Regiment; and when the former

Attack of  
the 3rd  
Division.

Extension  
of the 2nd  
Jägers.

Extension  
of the 54th.



extended towards the south, the 54th turned at the double towards the farm of St. Hubert, the Fusilier battalion leading, and the two others a little farther to the rear. Being under the impression that St. Hubert had been in the mean while occupied by the enemy, the 54th opened fire upon the living wall of German infantry. It can be imagined what a scene of confusion was the result. The fire of the 54th did not so much fall upon the troops which were in St. Hubert as upon the remains of the 69th, 72nd, 40th, and 39th, which had been pushed forward farther to the south. The whole of this movement was also preceded and accompanied by misfortune. It might have very well been arranged that the 54th should have been informed with regard to the condition of affairs at St. Hubert, and this was the more necessary since they had to encounter the darkness. This was the duty of the higher leaders, but the commander of the 54th also clung too closely to his men. But no time had been left to obtain this information, for the advance with drums beating, etc., and then the doubling, and lastly the amount of obstacles both in material and in the bodies of men and horses, etc., had excited the troops, whose order found a fresh enemy in the various obstacles encountered; and, the men having thus got out of the hands of their leader, the evil was done—one shot was heard, and was at once followed by a wild fusillade.

The third  
panic.

When wild animals have been hunted about throughout the day, all those of them who escape the enclosure into which endeavours are made to drive them, crouch down behind what cover they can find. Fear and dread prevent them from seeing or hearing anything, and they cower flat in the hollows of the ground. If then a shot is fired, or a shout is raised, the game jumps up and rushes away from it without consideration of where it is going. The case is exactly the same with broken men who have lost their *morale*, and with the skulkers in rear of them. The remains of the 43 companies, which we know to have been in and around St. Hubert, had been in the mean time increased by the addition of 16 companies to a total of 59. From these, under the cover of the falling darkness, men dropped off, one by one, running from the reservoir on the height into the valley; so that at the time of the passage of the Jägers and the 54th, through the bottom of the Mance Ravine, a considerable number of fugitives had collected there. The noisy bands of the troops were to these a signal to rise and "assemble" towards the rear. These skulkers were so entirely deprived of reason that they could no longer distinguish their own bands from those of the enemy, and they rushed through to the rear. This caused some delay and difficulty to the advancing troops, though they were not very much troubled by it. But when the troops in and near St. Hubert received a fire from behind them, the small bodies which were still there lost their order, and a flood of fugitives of every unit poured out upon the 54th. Under the pressure of this mixed mass, which had lost its head, and actually broke through and ran over the 54th, the fresh battalions naturally got out of the intended direction, and since other bodies of troops were moving along the main road close beside the 54th, the fugitives

poured in again into the valley on the top of the attacking troops, and here also it was possible only with the greatest trouble to keep up some amount of order. There were thus at this point two opposing streams—and this in darkness. One was flying without any order or any leaders from the front to the rear, while the other was moving in the opposite direction. This state of things lasted for hours, until the 2nd Corps had massed itself in a position a short distance from the enemy's front, and until total darkness had shrouded friend and foe. Under such circumstances there could be no idea of carrying out a night attack, and, owing to this fresh panic, the worst and the longest of the whole day, all attempt at simultaneous action at this point was from henceforward nipped in the bud, and it was a matter for rejoicing when it was found possible to put a stop to disorder, and to deploy the mass of men and columns into a line directed against Point du Jour. That this difficult work was carried out was due solely to discipline, for it was done on ground which was crowded with obstacles, and which was in the highest degree unsuited for the movements of troops. It was obviously useless to think any more of fighting, since all the preliminary conditions for it were wanting. A more detailed description of this panic, and of its effect in rear of the line of battle, is impossible, since total darkness shrouded the shouting, the howling and the crush, and night is discreet. But the soldier who knows war, and possesses some imagination, can picture to himself the scene of confusion. It was a mercy that, as usual, both sides were exhausted, otherwise a fresh and well-directed brigade of the enemy might at this moment have obtained a complete tactical victory of a local character, and might have decided the battle in favour of the French, since the other parts of the 3rd Division were then, owing to the circumstances in which they were placed, to a certain extent incapable of defending themselves. Wedged up in the wood, near and on the road, the masses were flowing back from the front and pressing forward from the rear, and piling themselves up at the most dangerous spot in the defile, each of them in the way of the other; while, owing to the wood and the darkness, those who strove to advance were unable to deploy from the order of march. This was in fact the climax of all the crises which had come about at this spot during the course of the day; but the goddess of battle was this time gracious to the Germans. The "tacticians of darkness" may test in this occurrence their brain and heart, and must finally keep silence as to their theories, otherwise some 18th of August may come to quite a different end!

I must especially draw attention to the fact that the garrison of St. Hubert was not disturbed by this panic.

The 54th, after they had allowed a passage to the fugitives shouting "Through! Through!" moved forward in two groups, the battalions being mixed together. The 11th, 5th, 2nd, 4th and 12th companies reinforced and prolonged (to the north) the line of the 2nd Jägers and the 39th; while the 9th, 10th, 8th, 7th, 6th, 3rd, and 1st companies turned towards St. Hubert, and, after having "captured" this farm with firing and shouting, took up the direction of Moscou. The attacks, which were made with drums beating, had no better

result than all the earlier ones. They came to a standstill at the line of German dead, which already marked the extreme limits of the German advance on Moscou and Point du Jour. There the men lay down, and tactical leading came to an end. The 2nd Corps had gained no more ground than had already been won by others in the course of the day.

The second capture of the quarries of Rozerieulles, and the fight there.

It is now necessary to go back to some other events, which really took place shortly after 7 p.m., and which, strange to say, do not receive the slightest mention in the Official Account, though they were the climax of the tactical success gained during the whole day in this part of the field of battle, and moreover prove to us that the way was paved for a satisfactory decision, before the main body of the 3rd Division had been let slip, and whilst General von Zastrow was arranging for the attack from the Mance mill. But we must remark that the junior leaders—from the brigade downwards—received either insufficient orders or no orders at all with respect to what they were to do, but were simply told to "attack" or to "advance." Such remissness may perhaps be excused as regards the 8th Corps in connection with their frontal attack at the end, for under such circumstances there is not much need for special orders, though during the two or three hours which the corps had spent in rendezvous formation in the neighbourhood of Villers aux Bois, there would have been plenty of time to inform every one of the impression which Goeben had imparted to the higher leaders; but the necessary communication between these higher leaders and the troops in front did not exist, and thus the latter remained in complete uncertainty with regard to decisive events. They might have known at last that St. Hubert was held by our men, since this could be seen from Gravelotte.

The case was quite different with respect to the quarries of Rozerieulles, and, in order that the circumstances may be realized, everything with regard to this shall be related consecutively. It is known that the 33rd, somewhere about the time when St. Hubert was stormed, had risen up in the gravel-pits with a view to taking possession of the quarries of Rozerieulles. The Official Account mentions this only casually, and relates it quite falsely, for it says that the 33rd were driven back by the overwhelming fire of the French, and thus did not capture the quarries.

When I was under the surgeon's hands in 1870, I had already, before the Official Account appeared, learnt from men who had taken part in the attack that the opposite was the case. After the Official Account appeared I inquired continually into the circumstances, and I now state that that history is incorrect, as has been proved to me beyond dispute by those who were present during the attack. The quarries of Rozerieulles formed the natural object for an attack from the front and right flank (from the Bois de Vaux, according to Moltke's order), in the direction of Châtel St. Germain. From the edge of the wood to their south-west point was about 350 yards. The quarries were about 550 yards long, with an extreme width of about 330 yards. I have myself ascertained these dimensions, and I have been assured by inhabitants of those parts, that at the time of my visit they were

exactly in the same condition as on the 18th of August, 1870. I found that the bottom of the quarry was so flat that any one who held the southern point could perfectly see into and overlook the inner space, as far as the third of the quarry which lay to the north. This was separated from the southern two-thirds by a mound which stood across the quarry, but in such a manner that from the southern end it was possible to observe what was going on at the northern end. The Germans who attacked could, of course, not be aware of this before the attack; but they realized it at once, as soon as they had reached the southern point. Beyond this mound there was really no cover worthy of mention on the bottom of the quarry. The consequence of this was that it was possible to penetrate into the quarries at many places from the north, south-west, or south, without any particular difficulty. Between these entrances the quarries were surrounded by sides of various slopes, but in some places perpendicular, which were here and there as much as 18 feet in height. This made it difficult for the French to regularly occupy and use them; and this disadvantage for the French became an advantage for the Germans, as soon as they had reached the quarries, inasmuch as they could nestle close up to the high sides and keep the inner spaces under fire. It was also possible from the mound to bring a heavy fire to bear upon the main road, which shut in the quarries to the north, at a range of about 200 yards.

When our success at St. Hubert was realized by the 33rd, the portions of that regiment (the 2nd Battalion and the 1st and 2nd companies) which were in and to the south of the gravel-pits, rose up, under the command of Lieut.-Colonel von Knobelsdorf, for a common rush upon the quarries. During this the 6th and 7th companies found themselves on the left flank, received an annihilating fire on their flank from Point du Jour, and were driven back; what remained of them, rushing past the gravel-pits, did not stop until they had returned to the wood. On the other hand, all the other companies penetrated into the quarries, the 5th and 8th in the front, and the 1st and 2nd on the south. This was somewhere between 2.45 and 3 p.m. The occupation of the quarries and the direction of the fire was then so carried out that the French abandoned the large southern section as far as the mound, and later on gave the latter. Thus, at about 3.30 p.m., the Germans were really in possession of the whole of the quarries, and thus a very great tactical success was obtained in the decisive direction. When General Frossard realized the bearing of this loss, he ordered the quarries to be re-captured. There were infantry ready for this purpose, who attacked in force and completely ran over the 33rd. The direction of the French attack made it quite clear why St. Hubert was not disturbed by the shock, and why Hasse's and Gnügge's Batteries were not lost. For General Frossard (at 4 p.m.) cared less about driving the Germans from St. Hubert than he did about guarding his one vulnerable spot. The 33rd fell back again into the wood. When they reached the line of the gravel-pits, followed closely by the French infantry, they were suddenly struck by a heavy infantry fire from the edge of the wood. This came



from detachments of the 60th, and from portions of the 33rd, who had remained behind or had already been broken. The fire of these disordered detachments exercised a demoralizing influence upon the unlucky 33rd. It may easily be conceived that they were seized with a panic, and in their flight drew with them other detachments of the 60th and 33rd.

The quarries remained until about a little before 7 p.m. in the possession of the French infantry. After that, by the exertions of various officers, whose names are intentionally not mentioned, it had been found possible to collect small detachments together; the 33rd alone, at 5 p.m., recovered possession of the gravel-pits which had before been lost. From 5 up to a little before 7 p.m., various bodies of other fractions of troops flowed in to them; first the 30th, which, as we know, had stopped the French charge of 4.30 p.m., but had then broken up altogether, and then, after the attack of the 32nd Brigade, the 40th Regiment. General Frossard's great counter-attack, which took place at 6.30 p.m., passed down the slope between the quarries and St. Hubert. As soon as the officers who were with the above-named troops in the gravel-pits observed this, they collected together detachments of the three regiments, and flung them energetically upon the quarries. Their success was complete. General Frossard had drawn all the infantry, except a weak detachment, out of the quarries for his attack, so that at this moment the quarries were not well defended. The 33rd, 39th, and 40th now again took possession of the large southern portion of the quarries as far as the mound, and remained in occupation of it until night.

After the French attack (between 6.30 and 7 p.m.) had been broken up, the greater part of the French, not knowing of this success of the Germans, rushed back towards the quarries. The 40th and the 39th, who were on the German left, swung round towards the northern side of the quarries and turned their fire upon the flying French, who were now in their turn seized with such a panic that they broke away in all directions like frightened and hunted deer. Some of them ran straight towards the patches of wood, where they were shot down or captured at a little distance from the edge. After the 40th and the 39th had thus cleared their front, they again formed front to the north (which the 33rd had up to this time not changed), and thus renewed their communication with the latter, and occupied the mound of which we have spoken. The above-mentioned panic of the French caused General Frossard to collect all that remained of his infantry who were still fit to fight; the detachments, which consisted of all sorts of regiments, now commenced uninterrupted and hot attacks upon the 39th, 40th, and 33rd. But the French were too much exhausted to be able to form a strong column of attack, and they now fought only in sections and companies. Nevertheless, they repeatedly succeeded in getting to within fifty paces of the Germans, but were each time repulsed. By this time it was quite 8 p.m., and it began suddenly to become somewhat dark. I have not been able to ascertain the strength of the 39th, 33rd, and 40th. Of the 33rd there were engaged in this struggle of heroes men of six sections



belonging to the 1st, 5th, and 8th Companies; altogether perhaps about 250 or 300 rifles were in action, but probably less rather than more.

During this struggle parts of the Jägers and of the 54th had also extended from the north against the quarries. At this critical moment the same fatality which reigned on the other side of St. Hubert overtook the defenders, who were proud of their success, and determined to hold on to their advanced and victorious position. Since the new-comers did not know that the quarries were in the hands of the Germans, the 39th, 40th, and 33rd suddenly received a couple of volleys from the rear, fired by the above troops of the 2nd Corps. These were followed by a continuous fire of skirmishers, while at the same time a hail of bullets fell among them from the French. At this moment the noise of the fire drowned everything, and no voice could make itself heard. From the left rear, and from the north, the brave men in the quarries received a continuous and hot fire, which was mingled with the roll of drums; and now at last the captors of the quarries realized that the fire and the drums were from our side. The remnant of these brave troops endured with resignation the reverse fire of their own friends, and still held their front against the enemy, in order to ward off their ceaseless attacks. They tried to make themselves audible by all shouting together "Prussians!" but this was of no use; the fire on their rear still continued.

While this was going on, fire and drums were heard from the south of the quarries also. This was, of course, the 73rd, who were arriving from the direction of the Mance mill. Some officers now determined to go to the right and left towards the German troops, in order to give them information with regard to the state of the action. Those who went to the right (south) failed to find the 73rd, for, knowing nothing of the success of the detachments who had captured the quarries, General von Glumer had first stopped their attack, and had then drawn them back into the wood. The officers who went to the north were more fortunate. They first came upon the 2nd company of the 2nd Jägers, then upon a part of the 4th company, and then upon the 5th and 11th companies of the 54th. When they had made these troops understand how matters were, they led into the quarries the 2nd and part of the 4th companies of the 2nd Jägers and the 11th company of the 54th. After receiving this reinforcement (at 8.30 p.m.) these troops felt that together they were strong enough to hold the position. Steps were taken with this object, whilst a confused roar continued towards the north, until at 9.30 p.m. the call, "Cease firing!" was taken up in the darkness and repeated along the whole front. The fire now gradually ceased along the entire line, and when the Germans fired no more, the enemy also were silent, as if they had heard the same bugle-call. It was then realized how much the defenders needed rest. Was it not now the moment when at last the order for the 2nd Corps, to simply advance to the front, would have been right? In three minutes they might have been in the enemy's position! The officers of the 33rd, 39th, and 40th assembled their troops after 10 p.m., in order then to lead back their band of heroes

to the rendezvous of the other units. An examination made on the following day showed that there were more than a hundred dead French between fifty and a hundred paces before the small front (towards the east). If it be desired to form an opinion as to the greatness of this effect, these losses must be compared with those of the whole of the French 2nd Corps. What the troops of the 39th, 40th, and 33rd did here, wearied and thinned as they were by the long struggle, can only be compared with the deeds done in the churchyard of Beaune la Roland, which I hope some day to describe—if God will leave me my sight. Of all the deeds of valour done on the battle-field on this day this was the greatest, and it was the most important tactical event, for it directly opened a door to victory for the 1st Army; but the door was not seen and not used.

Almost the whole of the official narrative deals with St. Hubert, though the fifty-nine companies which were at that point did not, after the capture of the farm, shoot fifty French. With respect to the heroes of the quarries of Rozerieulles, and with regard to the tactical importance of their capture of that post and their long occupation of it, and as to their action in a direction which was decisive (and had, moreover, been expressly laid down beforehand by Moltke), the Official Account says not one single word! Why not? What I now present as the real truth is the result of inquiries which have extended over years, and of extensive correspondence with various individuals. Ought it not to have been possible to derive these facts from the official history of the troops? Why has not this deed of heroism, a thing which is always rare, been written in words of fire—but simply, plainly, and distinctly—for the encouragement of the generation which is growing up? Indeed, I feel this deeply; but since I must say nothing, I mention this for those who can appreciate it.

Owing to the great distance from the quarries of Rozerieulles to the positions of Generals von Steinmetz and von Zastrow, any report that the quarries were at 7 p.m. in German hands would, even if an effort had been made to send one, have arrived too late. No such report was made, nor was there any effort to make it, nor was it, directly, the duty of the swarms of skirmishers to make it. Their leaders are not to be blamed for the omission. On the other hand, General von Zastrow was certainly to blame, in that he did not take care that everything of importance from the direction Mance mill-quarries of Rozerieulles was at once reported. He does not appear to have realized that this was a tactical point. If a regiment of Uhlans could remain for a long time deployed to the east of the wood, why could not individual officers, of the General Staff, or adjutants, have been posted in that direction, who might from thence have watched everything with tactical eyes, and who could have reported to the rear? This, indeed, should have been their place during the whole battle, and not to the west of the wood of Gravelotte. When the very simplest maxims and rules are absolutely neglected, no plan can possibly be carried out. In this case the troops had no idea beforehand what they were intended to do, nor had the superior leaders any notion where the troops were, or of what we had captured or what we had not

captured. There was no connection between the fighting-line and the leaders, and both of them were groping in the dark; and yet in peace, under such circumstances, report after report is sent in, even when everything can be plainly seen, and on such important matters as to whether a hare or a partridge is put up. If a system of communication had been arranged beforehand, General von Steinmetz must have known of the first capture of the quarries at 3 p.m.; but he and General von Zastrow knew no more about that than they did about the second capture. If the first capture had been known, then at last, even with such leaders as they had, masses of troops could have been pushed forward in good time and in the decisive direction, for such a fact as that must have given eyes to the blind. Perhaps the reason that this greatest deed of heroism of the troops has been passed over in silence, has been that it was feared that thinking men might at once be led by such events to express their thoughts about our "leaders." The troops, indeed, did all that they could to show their leaders the road to victory; but the leaders no more saw this than they understood Moltke's order. Under such circumstances, the attack of the 2nd and 7th Corps took place in entire ignorance of the true situation of the battle, and of how nearly the tactical decision had been brought about, at 7 p.m., by the capture of the quarries of Roserieulles. The assailants did not know whether St. Hubert and the quarries were ours, and the leaders did not know either; and thus by the measures which were actually taken even this success was brought in jeopardy. In spite of all, fate seemed at one moment to be inclined to be favourable to us; for when the attack against the front and flank was at last commenced, and, more by chance than by intention, closed in upon the quarries (the 2nd Jägers and the 54th being to the north, and the 73rd to the south of the band of heroes), that moment had arrived. But it was not recognized, and the offended coquette therefore turned her back on us, and punished General von Glümer with blindness. This shall be shown later on.

During these events another awful circumstance occurred. After the battle of the 16th of August, the severely wounded of the French were carried to the various buildings and farms in the neighbourhood of the field; for example, into Rezonville, Malmaison, and Mogador. When the German head-quarters had taken up their position between Malmaison and Mogador, these two points were fired on by the French artillery which stood near Leipzig; for the mass of men and horses which made up the German head-quarters formed an enticing target. Mogador was really a field-hospital, though the Geneva flag was certainly not flying on it; but every room and corner was filled with wounded. The unlucky victims of the preceding battles seem, perhaps owing to want of foresight and of organization, to have been abandoned by the French medical staff at the beginning of the battle of the 18th of August, so that there was no longer any communication between these unfortunate people and the outer world, and the German head-quarters had no more knowledge of these particulars than had any other German commander or body of troops. After a large number of French shell had fallen quite close to the German

The catastrophe of Mogador.

head-quarters, Mogador caught fire. This sort of thing is by no means unusual in a battle, and anything which will burn is allowed to burn, since every one has more important work in hand than to extinguish fires. This was especially the case on this particular flank, with its various and exciting events. Since the French hospital *personnel* was not on the spot, the wounded were left to themselves and were burnt, with perhaps the exception of some few among them. A few days later the remains of the charred bodies were found. These sufferers belonged to units of the French Guard and 2nd Corps. No fault can be found with Bazaine with regard to this matter, since at the time when his wounded were brought into Mogador the battle of the 16th was still undecided, and his dispositions for that of the 18th could not yet have been determined on. The reader must decide as to whether it was not really the duty of the French leader to withdraw the wounded out of the zone of action before the retreat of the 17th, since in the event of a fresh action they must be absolutely within the zone of fire. It might have been possible to do so with some little method, and the order to fall back to the neighbourhood of Metz, in order to renew the struggle, was given in the night between the 16th and 17th of August. Even if mitigating circumstances can be pleaded in excuse for not having evacuated this field-hospital, it must still remain a terrible reproach to the French medical staff that their own helpless wounded were either forgotten or deserted, with the result that, after they had suffered from wounds, they further met their death by fire.

Arrival of  
the main  
body of  
the 3rd  
Division.

Since the 54th formed in order of march when they passed along the main road, the depth of the column was consequently increased, and this caused some delay for the rear troops of the 3rd Division. The commander of the main body of the 3rd Division, General von Koblinski, was full of impatience to get on, and therefore allowed the main body to continue in movement. In consequence of this the 2nd and Fusilier Battalions of the 14th, and the 1st and Fusilier Battalions of the 2nd, came up close to the column of march of the 54th, as they pressed on to the south of the main road. This was an additional misfortune; since when, in consequence of the circumstances which have been narrated, the terrible scene took place in the night on the slope of Point du Jour, this column of march pushed on to the front through it all, and the 54th, the 39th, and the 2nd Jägers were all mixed together, and, without producing any tactical effect, became crowded together in such confusion that the masses were here again piled up one on the other, and fell on each other like surging waves. Thank God that at least the last regiment of the division, the 42nd, was still on the west of the defile! This was our punishment for allowing the units to follow each other without any interval, and for our want of experience in the conduct of a night action. This example plainly teaches us how necessary intervals are for an orderly advance of troops into action. If the correct intervals had been kept, the two battalions of the 14th and of the 2nd might have extended quietly on the slope, for they would not have been disturbed by the events which had already taken place there, and it might then have been



possible to carry out a decisive charge with drums beating and with the troops well in hand. On the contrary, individual battalions and companies now rushed into the whirl of battle, and again the advance was made with compact masses, which had become mere drops by the time they reached the firing-line. Thus was the attack of the 3rd Division broken up, since there were now already eight battalions of it out of hand and incapable of being directed. The four battalions on the right spread out from each other like a fan, and the four on the left remained in the rear of each other, so that the Fusilier Battalion of the 14th moved against the quarries of Rozerieulles, and the 2nd Battalion against Point du Jour, followed by the 1st Battalion of the 2nd, whilst General von Barnekow (of the 16th Division), being troubled about the loss of order, held back the Fusilier Battalion of the 2nd at the quarries of St. Hubert as a temporary reserve. When the confusion had somewhat abated, the Fusilier and the 1st Battalions of the 2nd moved on, but took the direction on the bend of the road. In the mean time the 2nd Battalion of the 2nd had come up in rear of the Fusilier Battalion, so that there were then four fresh battalions crowded one behind the other at this point. It was now 9 p.m., and the enemy's line could be distinguished only by the flashes of fire. It was impossible to judge exactly how far off it was, but at moments when all was still French voices and words of command could be fairly plainly heard. It was therefore intelligible that various companies should endeavour to press forward into the main position, where they saw the ruins of Point du Jour and of Moscou standing out in front of the flames; but all these attacks, which were undertaken without any unity, fell to pieces a short distance before their goal.

At this time of the senior generals the following were assembled at St. Hubert:—von Franzecky, von Barnekow, von Hartmann (of the 3rd Division), Hann von Weyhern (of the 4th Division), and a large number of commanders of brigades and regiments. They consulted as to what should now be done, since the attack of the 3rd Division might be considered as a failure, and at once committed another error. The small space was filled closely with masses of troops belonging to three corps. If it were considered that the enemy was still capable of assuming the offensive, the proper thing to do would have been to have got all the burnt-out slag into order and to have systematically withdrawn the troops before leading fresh troops into the crowd; for the last fresh battalions which had come up were strong enough to ward off an attack. The orders given were very different. Not only the 42nd Regiment, but even the 4th Division, received orders to follow on, although the officers of the staff could no longer see one another, and although they must have felt sure that there was no room for the troops to extend.

Arrival of  
the 4th  
Division.

In consequence of this the 42nd Regiment first moved off, and that in the direction Point du Jour-bend of the road. The columns were able to advance only very carefully. When they formed line of columns to the south of St. Hubert, they began to fall into confusion. They certainly succeeded in passing through the firing-line; but this was the end of it, and the commander was "compelled" to leave the



regiment in line of columns of battalions, with the 2nd Battalion on the left, the 1st in the centre, and the Fusilier Battalion on the right. On their right, towards the north, rested the before-mentioned mass of columns.

At about 9.30 p.m. the 21st and the 61st Regiments began also to deploy near St. Hubert, with a view to taking up a position to the south of that place, and of advancing thence to the east. Later on these were followed again by the 9th and 49th Regiments (of the 7th Brigade), so that by about 10.30 p.m. twenty-four fresh battalions were massed on a front of about 1350 yards: how this was done no one can say. If we take the remains of the 8th Corps at St. Hubert, which had been increased to fifty-nine companies, twelve companies (the 39th) of the 7th Corps, four companies (1st Battalion of the 77th) which had closed up to their right to the 3rd Division, and again six companies of the 33rd, and seven of the 60th, we shall find that there were forty-eight battalions in a space about a mile in width and 1100 yards in depth. Has anything like this ever been seen? By about 10 p.m. the Germans had reduced themselves to a defenceless state, since they could no longer move in such a manner as to be capable of fighting. This was indeed a most dangerous situation; but the enemy was so exhausted that it was possible to make the very worst errors close in front of the muzzles of his rifles without suffering any punishment. This is quite evident when we consider the circumstances which occurred with reference to the 7th Corps.

Why were these masses brought up in the dark? In order to attack! Why did they not attack with the twenty-four fresh battalions? Those who understand what is meant by "moral strength" can easily answer this question. Tactically considered, the most unfavourable situation conceivable had been brought about, and by 10 p.m. nothing remained in hand, for at that time there was at this spot no reserve worthy of the name, since these masses were defenceless. They were no better than a wall made of stones, which have no power of motion in the wall. They had no longer any value as reserves, since they were all "committed to action." They had endured all crises, from the enemy, from the darkness, from disorder and from panic, and this while in actual contact with the enemy, and distant only from 200 to 300 yards from his main position. If any one dares to use the word "reserves" in this case, let him remember these facts, and not allow himself to be befooled by pedantic nonsense. He will then learn something from tactics, and will condemn the tactical principles of those who gloss over errors.

We must now once more ask the question, Why did not the twenty-four fresh battalions of Pomeranians rush in without a shot upon their enemy, who was at this very moment being attacked from the right, and who was, moreover, tired out and far inferior in numbers? We hear so much said of "dash," and especially of "Pomeranian dash," and also of "charging in without firing a shot," and of the "advantages of night fighting." In this instance there were only 200 or 300 yards to cross, and the troops were massed; thus the zone of fire had been passed, and the masses were still closed up. If it was

possible to remain massed at from 200 to 300 yards from the enemy's front until 6 a.m. on the 19th—for eight whole hours—while here and there they were under heavy fire with their arms at the shoulder, why did not the troops get across this 300 yards with drums beating, and without a shot, using their bayonets, or the famous "Pomeranian butt"—all which would at the most have taken three minutes? We should have lost no more men than we did during the eight hours. It was—I dare to say it—because no one understood how to fight. They did not know how to fight as skirmishers or in columns or in closed lines; and this event, more than any other, was really a sign of the bankruptcy of our tactics. Three corps, composed of Pomeranians, Poles, Hanoverians, Westphalians, Rhinelanders, Brandenburgians, Thuringians, East Prussians, and Magdeburgers, could not gain their object, because, setting aside the mistakes of the superior leaders, no one knew how to fight. No one can say a word against this statement, nor against this other, that by about 10 p.m. the troops had been practically reduced to a defenceless state.

That there was sufficient moral strength remaining is proved by their endurance through the eight hours; but it is not sufficient that the moral strength is there; it must be made use of.

It was decided at Malmaison, when it was found that the enemy remained quiet and men had begun to recover their breath, to withdraw the infantry of the 7th and 8th Corps, and to hold the slope during the night with the 2nd Corps. This was a confession that the attack had failed, and it distinctly placed the enemy in the position of victor. Twenty-four massed battalions had been brought up, and yet no one knew how to use one massed battalion in a decisive manner; indeed, there never was any question of an attack by battalions. Can it be said that the German infantry knew how to attack? In order to carry out the above decision, the 4th Division moved at 11 p.m. into the foremost line, having the 7th Brigade on the right and the 8th on the left, while the 3rd Division was massed a quarter of a mile to the rear. In the mean time the infantry of the 7th and 8th Corps fell slowly back. The retirement lasted throughout the whole night; indeed, on the next morning, many of the men were still wandering about in the woods, looking for their units, and it is indeed wonderful that, under the difficulty of the circumstances, this operation—carried out in the night—was in general so successful as it was.

Assembly  
of the 7th  
and 8th  
Corps.

It was not until St. Hubert had been evacuated by the troops of the 8th Corps that Gnügge's Battery limbered up, packed the wounded on the limbers, and, though much crowded and hindered on the way, fell back at a walk towards Gravelotte, at which place it joined the artillery of the 7th Corps at midnight. Since the arrival of the 2nd Corps the battery had only fired a shot now and then, and had then entirely ceased firing and quietly held on, until, in good order and completely under the command of its leader, it as a body abandoned the position which it had held with so much honour, glory, and success.

The infantry of the 7th and 8th Corps withdrew for the most part

in disorder and without any leaders, and, curiously enough, here again the stormers of St. Hubert, the 67th and the 8th Jägers, preserved the best appearance and order. The only one of the larger units of troops which left the field of battle to some extent in close order was the 39th. In the direction of La Folie the infantry of the 8th Corps there present remained during the night in contact with the enemy. As for the rest, the 8th Corps assembled somewhat to the north of the main road, and the 7th to the south of it; on the following morning the 3rd Division also was withdrawn to the neighbourhood of Gravelotte.

As we know, the 9th Hussars divided themselves into three detachments. The first (half of the 4th and the reserve squadron) had bolted to the rear; the 1st squadron, after its futile charge, had taken up a position in rear of the 39th; and two and a half squadrons remained near St. Hubert. When the first troops were withdrawn from the hill, the hussars fell back at the same time; and during the night all the three detachments came together at Gravelotte, without, however, knowing anything whatever about the 8th Corps. The "Regimental History of the 9th Hussars" says that the regiment was assembled at 11 p.m., but I think it must have been an hour later. When the retirement began, various regimental bands, which had remained behind to the north and south of the main road, began to play. Some of them played, "Heil dir in Siegerkranz;"\* and others, "Nun danket alle Gott."† If the matter had not been so serious, and if it had not been a question of the highest feelings of our inner life, one might have felt inclined to regard this as a parody. At any rate, the troops entered upon this last act with music, and came back from it with music, which was a bitter irony for tacticians; and for such tacticians it was a formal celebration of slaughter of the first class.

And, indeed, this terrible night scene, taken with the many which had preceded it, might well call up the recollection of the most awful events of the world's history; for both the highest leaders and the troops were filled with awe as they abandoned this patch of ground—and they were filled, above all, with consuming uncertainty.

The attack  
of the  
7th Corps.

In consequence of the measures taken by General von Zastrow, only four battalions of all the infantry available had attacked from the Bois de Vaux. Of these, the 1st Battalion of the 77th chanced upon the direction of the gravel-pits, and eventually on Point du Jour, and there thus remained only the three battalions of the 73rd (joined later on by the 1st and 4th companies of the 13th) still available for a simultaneous attack. General von Osten led these, with tactical correctness, to the south of the quarries of Rozerieulles, and against the main road, which there forms a salient angle; but it was too late. The commander of the division, Lieutenant-General von Glümer, who was there present, stopped these battalions, who were advancing well, and, on account of the "darkness," drew them back to the edge of the wood, where they remained almost out of

\* "Hail to thee wearing the wreath of victory!" the Prussian National anthem, which is set to the same air as "God save the Queen!"

† "Now all thank God!" (Luther's hymn).

action. To the right of these three and a half battalions, and almost at the same time with them, five battalions (the 7th Jägers, the 2nd and Fusilier Battalions of the 13th, and the 1st and 2nd of the 53rd), had pressed forward, and got within about 150 yards of the main road. The movement of these eight and a half battalions took place at a favourable moment, in so far as the enemy had shortly beforehand commenced his offensive from Point du Jour; while the quarries of Rozerieulles were then for the greater part in our possession, and the 2nd Corps was deploying in the same direction, but against the front. Though it was not possible to make the movements of the two corps simultaneous, yet their attacks by chance took place at about the same time; and this explains why from this time forward the attitude of the enemy was passive and timid. But how much greater would the result have been if about fifteen battalions, who were on the spot, had been brought earlier into action in the direction which was now followed by the 7th Corps! In that case, indeed, we should have made our way into the main position—if, at least, General von Glümer would have allowed the troops to pursue their way, instead of drawing them back as he did. They would then have come in contact with the captors of the quarries of Rozerieulles, who, as is known, endeavoured in vain to get touch to the right, since in the mean time the 73rd had fallen back. After the troops under General von Osten began to retire, the enemy made two or three short counter-attacks against the battalions further to the right; but these were all repulsed, and resulted only in a halt of the Germans. Just then a movement began along the whole line, the 2nd Battalion of the 13th being at the most about 100 yards from the enemy. Unfortunately, here also a guiding hand was wanting, and the attack came to a halt, the troops lying down, although it was dark, and the consequent transition to a fire-fight was the beginning of the end. With the exception of the 2nd Battalion of the 13th, who at a distance of 100 yards from the enemy kept up a steady fire-fight until the following morning, the battalions turned back to the edge of the wood. Here, also, there could be no question of a simultaneous attack, and only one solution was possible, "to dash on with drums beating into the rough and tumble." But the "rough and tumble" would not have been so bad; at least, Lieutenant-Colonel (as he then was) von der Busche, of the 2nd Battalion of the 13th, was of opinion that a decided attack with the troops who were then on the spot would have without doubt succeeded, and would have drawn after it the capture of the position of Point du Jour. Von der Busche was certainly in a position to form a judgment on this point.

Thus, in spite of Moltke's order of 10.30 a.m., no one up to 10 p.m. had understood how to carry out anything of importance in the decisive direction which had been clearly laid down by Moltke, and thus the French continued to hold their positions in front of the 7th Corps. No one can maintain that the enemy's fire was the cause of this, since the losses of the 7th and of the 2nd Corps were small, considering the task allotted to them. Moreover, no



real attack was made by either the 2nd or the 7th Corps, and this was solely the fault of the higher leaders; since even at 10 p.m.—if they had had any energy or reasonable sense—such an attack should have been made.

As far as regards the assembly of the troops, the 8th Corps succeeded during the night in re-forming most of the units of command, and in placing itself in a suitable tactical condition. The 7th Corps, on the other hand, remained still scattered; the 27th Brigade was in camp in close order near Gravelotte, to the south of the main road, and in their neighbourhood were the three battalions of the 77th and the Fusilier Battalion of the 53rd (belonging to the 28th Brigade); in front of Rozerieulles were the three battalions of the 73rd and the 1st of the 13th (which belonged to the 25th Brigade); farther to the right were the 7th Jägers, the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 53rd, and the 2nd and Fusilier Battalions of the 13th (belonging to the 28th and 25th Brigades); while still farther to the right was the 26th Brigade. The artillery and cavalry of the 8th, 7th, and 2nd Corps remained as a whole at the points where they had stood during the battle.

The enemy  
abandons  
the posi-  
tion.

The measures which have been described placed the Germans in a position to, if necessary, renew the struggle in the early morning of the 19th of August in fairly good order, and from points close in front of the muzzles of the enemy's rifles. In rear of the 2nd Corps were nearly the whole of the 8th Corps, and a great part of the 7th. But there was no question of a fresh struggle, for the enemy abandoned Moscou at 3 a.m., and Point du Jour at 5.30 a.m., while at 6 a.m. the enemy's positions were occupied by the German 4th Division.



## VIII.

## MOLTKE AFTER THE BATTLE.

GENERAL VON MOLTKE had watched the last struggle on the slope of Point du Jour, and rode back at 10.30 p.m. with the head-quarters in the direction of Rezonville. The impression which he had gained of the fight of the 1st Army was not favourable; on the contrary, the general seemed by no means pleased to leave the field of battle. But he did so with the firm determination that, after the assembly of the 8th and 7th Corps had taken place under cover of the 2nd, a decision must be arrived at in the very early morning of the following day. Much which the day had brought forth could have given no pleasure to the general; but he had at least seen what had taken place with the 1st Army, while he knew how matters there stood, and that in any case the battle was all over for the night.

Affairs were very different with regard to the 2nd Army. St. Privat had fallen at about the time that the 2nd Corps extended against Point du Jour, and the enemy had soon afterwards abandoned Amanvillers also. Moreover, Prince Frederic Charles had already taken steps to destroy the communications in the valley of the Moselle (the order of the 12th Corps at 11.45 a.m.), and had thus acted entirely in the spirit of Moltke's intentions. The prince had then remained present at the struggle until it had completely ceased, and at 8.30 p.m. had already issued suitable orders for the night. Owing to the great distance between St. Privat and Gravelotte, the report of Prince Frederic Charles on all these matters did not reach General von Moltke on the field of battle, and did not indeed find him until during the night at Rezonville. On the other hand, the prince also had received no further orders from Moltke, but had fought out the battle quite independently. In this he received the very greatest assistance from the commander of the 12th Corps; but the glory of the victory of St. Privat fell principally to the account of Prince Frederic Charles, and not to that of Moltke. For even though Moltke (at 10.30 a.m.) had prescribed a turning attack to the prince, yet this was done from false premises, while the prince, without any further aid from any one, understood how to adapt Moltke's ideas to vastly different conditions and in the best manner possible. He even went further than Moltke, since already, at 11.45 a.m., he of his own accord ordered the communications in the Moselle Valley to be destroyed, repeated the order

Moltke's  
feelings.

Prince  
Frederic  
Charles,  
General  
Steinmetz,  
and  
Moltke's  
original  
idea.

at 3.45 p.m., and at 6 p.m. ordered infantry to push forward into that valley. Though the prince at first failed through some omissions, etc., yet he redeemed this by his activity, his circumspection, and his wise orders, and further by his development of Moltke's original idea, so that he in fact won both battles. The prince was on this day a model of a general, and one who need not fear comparison even with a Napoleon. He, by his measures, changed a day which would otherwise have been lost into the most decisive turning-point of the whole war, for without St. Privat there could have been no Sedan, etc. His circumspection and activity—ever striving to carry out as completely as possible Moltke's original idea—warm our hearts, just as General von Steinmetz repels us with his awkwardness and his misplaced energy. General von Steinmetz entirely failed to understand Moltke on the 18th of August; indeed, if he had wished to do everything in his power to make Moltke's original idea an absolute failure, he could have done nothing worse than what he did. That is, of course, out of the question; but the fact must weigh heavily against Steinmetz as a general. It needs great strength of character to realize how those below us utterly fail to understand us, how those above us entirely refuse our advice, with a result such as this, namely, an indecisive tactical situation, and yet to keep silence, and to bear all in patience and forbearance, strong in the conviction that time will bring the truth to light. Such were the circumstances in which Moltke found himself, when he turned his horse's head towards Rezonville. Could he hope for anything better from the 2nd Army? Might he not there also be misunderstood? Would not it be even worse there, since that was the strategical flank; and might not matters there have so completely changed since 5 p.m., when Moltke received the last report from the prince, that the directions of the chief of the staff would have arrived too late? The uneasy hours which Moltke lived through, from 5.30 p.m. until the report of the victory reached Rezonville, must have shown him plainly the disadvantages of a faulty selection of the standpoint for the commander-in-chief; other considerations may, however, be of far greater force than the laws of war.

Moltke must have felt, as he rode away, that the battle was indecisive, and that it must be renewed on the 19th. The headquarters went, as we have said, to Rezonville, the staff of the 1st Army to Gravelotte, and that of the 2nd to Doncourt. Prince Frederic Charles, at 5 a.m. on the 19th, despatched the chief of the staff of the corps to Caulre farm—a sign that he recognized the strategical situation, as also appears from the explanations which General von Stiehle gave with the order of the prince. In this he said that on the 19th it would be a question "of entirely shutting in the enemy, and of cutting him off from all communication with the outer world." It is evident that Moltke's original idea was entirely followed and worked out by the prince; he actually brought pressure to bear from the left flank, and it was possible thence on the 19th to more and more complete the turning movement,

whereas the condition of affairs in which the 1st Army had broken off the action led as directly to a frontal attack as did the various circumstances of the 18th. In the 1st Army the general idea had not been grasped, and therefore the mass of the troops had never been placed at the decisive point; that is to say, for an attack on the flank from the Bois de Vaux. Prince Frederic Charles went from Caulre farm to Rezonville, at which place, in the mean time, the whole extent of his victory had become known. After a report had arrived from the 1st Army also with regard to the retreat of the enemy, the preparations for shutting in the hostile force were at once commenced—the original idea was thus entirely carried out.

In this matter Prince Frederic Charles had again fortunately anticipated Moltke, since at 5 a.m. an order with verbal explanations had already been issued by him with a view to this blockade. The original idea of the battle belongs to Moltke, and to Moltke only. The execution of this idea, by skilful, wise, and far-seeing employment of circumstances which differed from those contemplated by the order of battle, and which were only clearly discernible at a later period, is due on the other hand to Prince Frederic Charles, and to him alone. The victory of St. Privat of itself entailed the evacuation of Point du Jour and the victory of Gravelotte. The new idea, to shut in the enemy, and also its immediate execution, was shared by Frederic Charles and Moltke; the former had first given it expression in a definite form at 5 a.m. on the 19th of August, though his order, given at 8.30 p.m. on the 18th, contained the same idea. The day of Gravelotte was the most successful in the life of the prince, a real day of triumph as a general, and no human power can deprive him of his reward. By the victory of St. Privat the prince saved General von Steinmetz from a painful position, since the consequences of this victory made themselves felt at Moscou and at Point du Jour before midnight on the 18th; the French left flank abandoned their gloriously defended positions in order to avoid the results of this victory, and not from any dread of the masses of men who were heaped up in their front. The irritability of General von Steinmetz was excited anew by having to share his victory with the prince. In addition to the serious question which had already arisen as to "Moltke and Steinmetz," there was now a second as to "Prince Frederic Charles and Steinmetz," of which the end was the recall of the latter. General von Steinmetz submitted a memorandum on these two "disputes" to the Emperor William I., which the general wished to publish after the emperor had read it. William I. read the memorandum, but did not consider any publication desirable, and so informed General von Steinmetz. The latter was too good a soldier not to see that such a wish was a command, and the greater praise is due to him for this, inasmuch as the Official Account of the battle of Gravelotte heaps up abundant blame on the general for matters with regard to which he committed no fault. Steinmetz consequently went to his grave exposed and blamed before the whole of his contemporaries. It required no little self-restraint to

bear this, and to allow himself to be publicly held up to blame without defending himself. General von Steinmetz was strong enough to exercise this self-restraint; and though the conviction which he felt, that history would some day exonerate him, was erroneous, this fact has no power to alter my opinion. The general was found wanting—and badly wanting—on the day of Gravelotte, but he has found no defender against the unjust and unfounded blame which was thrown upon him.\*

The motives of the two "disputes" have nothing in common with this matter, since all that General von Steinmetz ordered and neglected from 3 p.m. on the 18th of August, would alone fully justify his recall from the command of the 1st Army, and in this respect the judgment of the Official Account calls for no alteration; for this purpose there is no need to await the publication of the Memoirs. But how would the 18th of August have turned out if, regarding the two army commanders, we suppose the 1st Army in the place of the 2nd? It is impossible to imagine what would in this case have happened on the German left and in the centre; but it is certain that Prince Frederic Charles, if he had been on the German right, would have fully understood how to carry out Moltke's order of 10.30 a.m., and would have turned the enemy's flank on this part of the field also. It seems to me certain that he would have found ways and means to carry on the frontal attack in the same manner as that of the 3rd of July, 1866, and he would, moreover, by strongly pressing the front, have prepared and carried through the main attack from the south against the enemy's left flank. This shows clearly how much depends

\* The accusations and imputations made against Steinmetz in the Official Account are as follows:—

"General von Steinmetz, watching from the Gravelotte heights the course of events in advance of his own front during the forenoon, had first awaited the development of the struggle on his left, as prescribed (?) by the instructions which he had received" (?) (part iv. p. 70).

According to the order of 10.30 a.m., General von Steinmetz was to attack simultaneously with the 2nd Army (p. 16); to this was verbally added by General von Sperling: "General von Steinmetz is not to attack until the 2nd Army on his left flank has gone farther in advance (!) and is in readiness to co-operate" (!) (p. 16).

"The 7th Corps is at first to maintain a defensive attitude" (4 a.m. on the 18th of August). "Upon the 7th Corps will devolve, in the first instance, the duty of protecting the movements of the 2nd Army against any hostile enterprises from the side of Metz" (order for operations of 2 p.m. on the 17th, part vi. p. 1).

"At this time (1.15 p.m.) General von Steinmetz received the guiding directions issued after the commencement of the action at Verneville, in which General von Moltke again prescribed a delaying attitude to the 1st Army, while still permitting the preparation of the attack by artillery" (part vi. p. 71).

"The leading idea (of the guiding directions) was for the right wing and centre of the German army to hold the main forces of the adversary in check, until the left wing of the 2nd Army had thoroughly cleared up the situation on his lines of retreat, and, in the event of the French forces making a stand to the west of Metz, until it had surrounded their left flank from the north" (part vi. p. 102).

"The original task of the 1st Army, that of drawing the adversary upon itself (?), was fulfilled, and by the impetuosity of the troops even in a certain extent exceeded (?). For whilst the 7th Corps, in accordance with its former instructions (?), had in general limited itself to maintaining those places which it had originally occupied, the 8th had, with the capture of St. Hubert, moved close up to the enemy's main positions. The French must therefore have expected an attack at any moment upon their left wing, and kept in consequence their reserves in rear of the centre (?) until it was too late (?) to support the right wing" (?) (part vi. p. 110).



upon the personal value of the leader of an army, and that the best ideas remain ideas only, if the commander of an army does not know how to work them out. A general of the importance of a Moltke requires, in order to carry out his ideas, executive officers with wide views, men who know how to "read events" in his manner. In Frederic Charles Moltke found such a general, but not in Steinmetz.

The battle of St. Privat-Gravelotte was a strategical battle, and was really as good as won from the moment when the strategical movements into the battle had been carried out, and when the German armies had completed their change of front to the right. In spite of the serious negligence and the evil episodes which took place, the change of front to the right was carried out, and Moltke was thus enabled to select the form of attack which he always preferred—a frontal attack combined with a turning movement against one or both flanks. There can be no doubt that he intended to turn both flanks, that is to say, the execution of the battle was thought out with reference to turning both flanks, though naturally the enemy's right was the main object of all efforts. Prince Frederic Charles cleared up Moltke's errors with regard to the extension of the enemy's position, and only when this had been done was that possible which Moltke intended. Some people now say that it was not necessary to attack the French after the German change of front to the right had been completed, and to thus expend 20,000 men in order to win the battle. Now, if 20,000 men were lost, this is not the fault of Moltke, but of the Prince of Württemberg, of General von Steinmetz, etc.; but whether the battle was necessary after the change of front to the right had been completed, is not a reasonable subject for discussion. The situation of the war pressed for decisive action, and, even leaving this out of the question, it is psychologically foolish to demand that two armies, of which one wishes to hinder the other from carrying out its intentions, can remain for a long time in front of each other without fighting. When men are standing opposite to each other within rifle range, the situation will admit of no delay. If any one thinks so, he ought not to have anything to do with the art of war, for under such circumstances human nature impels men to come to blows, and no discipline in the world can avert it; so that the most that could be obtained would be, that one would be forced into the struggle at an unseasonable moment. If it be said that the French army could not remain long in their position, and that they must very soon either retire through the valley of the Moselle or attack the Germans, in order to open a way by the lines of retreat which they had lost, in which case the Germans would not have found it necessary to attack a specially prepared position, but would have been themselves attacked—such statements show an absolutely childish way of looking at things. A situation of such tension as existed in the evening of the 17th of August must result in a battle; and yet these theorists now refuse to accept the very result towards which every effort and great exertions were directed! And if it be said that Bazaine could not wait long, but must soon have attacked, I say that it is better "to lay down the law than to allow it to be dictated to us."



On this point we now know that Bazaine's measures were governed by political motives: this alone makes all these objections of no value. The change of front to the right of such masses as up to that time had never been moved into action by one hand, demanded from the chief of the general staff quite extraordinary exertions, even leaving out of the question the direction of the individual armies. For the whole of the columns had to be in hand and ready to take up the new direction, while there must be no scarcity of either supplies or ammunition, and it must be possible to look after thousands of wounded. These great tasks were carried out, and the troops suffered from no want of anything; they had their ammunition, and the wounded were continually carried off in an orderly manner. Even if Moltke's measures were not always free from error, the grandeur of his surpassing strategy shows itself distinctly during these short periods; and, taking it as a whole, the strategy of the 18th of August is pervaded by one main thought, of which the creator is, and always will be, Moltke. Tactically considered, the execution of this thought certainly ran many dangers; but Moltke should not be blamed for this, inasmuch as such things will always occur more or less.

But if Gravelotte-St. Privat must be taken together as strategical battles, they contain for the leader of a battle the weighty lesson, how important is a correct choice of his personal position. If it be selected as it was in this case, not only is the possibility of direction given up, but also that of co-operation. One has not always a Frederic Charles under one; and we cannot always, therefore, be quite sure of such assistance as is capable of dealing with great considerations, such as were implied in the order of 10.30 a.m. It is incorrect to maintain that the direction of such a battle is possible only in a strategical sense. This is absurd: it must be always possible to direct, as far as armies and corps are concerned, and it might have been possible in this case. In any case the connection between the head-quarters and the 2nd Army after 5 p.m. ought not to have been so completely lost as was the case. But it is a good rule, when speaking of such things, to leave on one side all subtle refinements, for example, not to speak of strategy or of tactics, since in such matters these two are inseparable. We speak of fighting and of victory, and for these we need both direction and co-operation, more even than was the case on the 18th of August.

Moltke in  
Rezonville.

Moltke reached Rezonville after 11 p.m. He spoke little on the way there, which is intelligible on many grounds, and not the least on account of the great bodily exertions which he had undergone on the 17th and 18th of August. On the 17th he had been in continual bodily activity from 4 a.m. to 5 p.m., and had obtained only a short rest in the middle of the night at Pont à Mousson. Then arrived the letter of General von Steinmetz, of which mention has been made. Moltke got up at 3 a.m., and answered the general's note at 4 a.m., after which the head-quarters started for Flavigny. On their arrival at Rezonville the place was found to be full of wounded, so that it was only with difficulty that a small garret was found for the king, in which the monarch finished the night. By far the greater part of

the head-quarters remained during the night in the open air. Under such circumstances did Moltke himself await the reports from Prince Frederic Charles, in a state of uncertainty which can be imagined, but, as was always the case with him in the most critical situations, in perfect calm. Indeed, under these overwhelming circumstances, he even took his regular sleep, which is a remarkable sign of the soundness of his nerves and of the strength of his mind. When the victorious message of Prince Frederic Charles arrived after midnight, the chief of the general staff received it with his peculiar outward equanimity; and, as if he had been sure of it all along, at once drew up the dispositions for reaping the fruits of the great success, so that the whole situation was ready to be laid before the king in the early morning of the 19th.

## IX.

## TACTICAL CONCLUSIONS.

JUST as the head-quarters of the 2nd Army to a certain extent—in their case fortunately—escaped from control, and went their own way, so the troops in that part of the field of battle of which we have been speaking escaped from their commanders, and this under circumstances such (for instance, in the case of the 3rd Division) as necessitated their being kept in hand. Most conspicuous of all is the distressing fact that out of fifty-seven battalions only once were four battalions (the three of the 72nd and one of the 40th) led well in hand to the attack; and even as regards this instance I am still doubtful, since I cannot clearly make out whether two battalions did not first attack, followed again by the other two. If we survey the whole space, about 1100 yards square, brigades, regiments, and battalions were everywhere entirely broken up, and out of whole brigades only companies mixed together and in confusion came up to the actual shock. Gallantly as these behaved, the attacks almost always ended in our repulse. It is not possible to count the number of the different “advances,” as we have learnt euphemistically to call them, which were made; but there were at least a hundred! Since I have already, while relating the main phases of the battle, criticized the principal mistakes, I will say little more here, in order to avoid repetitions.

When a number of sportsmen stand round a rabbit-burrow, and the rabbits are bolted out of the burrow, he must be a bad shot who cannot hit them. This was exactly the case here. The main road was the burrow, the sportsmen who had surrounded it were the French, while the part of the ferret was played by the “tacticians.” Every child can see that it was quite natural that the troops, when they bolted out of the burrow, should be dashed back again. But not only were masses of infantry driven through this bolt-hole from midday until late at night, but the same was done to masses of cavalry and artillery; indeed, they were all driven into it and through it at the same time, and were thus all made defenceless for the moment. It is impossible really to say that a “reconnaissance” was needed, since, when a battle is in full blast, that stage may be taken to be past. But if then the masses of cavalry (1st Division), and of infantry (2nd Corps), were to be driven through the bolt-hole, the superior leaders and the commanders of the units (divisions) ought to have gone beforehand to the points where the columns were to extend, so that they might be at hand when the troops themselves

came up. This was especially necessary in the case of the commander of the 1st Cavalry Division, but instead of this he stuck himself in the middle of the column; only one officer did rightly in this respect, this was the commander of the artillery of the 7th Corps.

Of the 7th Corps the massed artillery alone was correctly employed, as was also (on the whole) the 8th Corps, with the exception of the 32nd Infantry Brigade, which, in my opinion, should have taken the direction of Leipzig; but this point is open to dispute. The employment of the infantry of the 8th Corps contrasts favourably with that of the 7th and 2nd Corps. If it was impossible to always keep the fighting intervals of the corps, there was, at any rate, no need to push the 27th Infantry Brigade into the zone of the 8th Corps, or to mix up the 39th Regiment with the 29th Infantry Brigade; the 29th and the 30th were directed well on the whole; at any rate, they advanced into the battle in the desired direction, re-formed after they had captured the woods, and then pressed forward stage by stage until St. Hubert fell. They also took up some sort of a fire-position, although this at a later phase was very little suited for the requirements of such a position. Generals von Wedell, von Strubberg, and von Weltzien showed themselves to be wary tacticians, who correctly appreciated the facts, and made correct dispositions; the arrival of General von Strubberg at the fork of the valley towards La Folie-Leipzig was of special importance. Moreover, the capture of St. Hubert, in spite of the obstacles, could scarcely have been better prepared and carried out by the two brigades who moved on that spot.

The pushing on of the reserve (31st Infantry Brigade) was right as regards the time selected; that it did not do all that von Goeben intended was not his fault, but was due to Generals von Steinmetz and von Zastrow, who sent the cavalry and the artillery in the same direction at the same moment. The conduct of the struggle was, as regards the 8th Corps, generally good, and this under difficult circumstances, while the fight of the 15th Division was one of the most glorious episodes in the history of war. Indeed, all the later efforts together really did nothing more than this division did by itself. The reinforcement of the 15th Division with the 16th, by pushing it in by brigades, is not exactly normal, but it cannot be blamed under such trying circumstances; moreover, it brought about no appreciable disadvantage.

The pushing forward of the 9th Hussars over the Mance Ravine was a tactical mistake; the arrival of the reserve horses at this very moment was a real fatality.

The massing of the troops in and near St. Hubert, such as took place from 5 p.m., was under all circumstances an error. There was no proper occupation of the farm and its neighbourhood, nor was any effective fire-position for infantry obtained. All the steps taken later increased the effect of this original mistake; nothing was done to remove it, and nothing to mitigate it; no superiority of fire was therefore obtained, and it might have been possible to abstain with advantage from the wild attacks which only brought about repulses. For it is well known that no attack can in these days hope for



success unless a previous superiority of fire has been obtained, while in this case there were no modifying circumstances. Nevertheless, company after company was sent forward, always in the same direction, without having even attempted to obtain any effect from infantry fire; for this reason they all ended badly.

That no effort was made to obtain a superiority of fire is strikingly proved by the French losses, for the whole of their 2nd Corps lost only 27 officers and 670 men, and Lapasset's Brigade 4 officers and 60 men, or a total of 761.\* Add to this Aymard's Division, 45 officers and 900 men; Metman's Division (half of), 16 officers and 300 men; 1 officer and 20 men of the Voltigeur Regiment of the Guard; altogether 2043, including 93 officers.

The repeated and strong attacks of the French from Point du Jour were to a certain extent successful, but only because our infantry had no fire-position, otherwise a repeated and complete rout of our infantry could not have taken place. These successful counter-attacks also show us how weak the fighting power of swarms of skirmishers is, for they were swept away like dust by the repeated charges, having exhausted themselves by their incessant independent attacks in small bodies. So far, however, as under such circumstances it is possible to discuss the system of a superior command with reference to a fixed object, there was real "leading" in the 8th Corps, though the 7th Hussars on the left were a little rash!

From the moment when the Generals von Steinmetz and von Zastrow commenced their independent action, mistake after mistake was made, so that one fault really succeeded another. It would lead us too far if we now endeavoured to set forth the whole list of them. Neither general understood Moltke's order for the battle, and they both neglected all preparations for an attack in the direction in which alone it could be successful, and which had been clearly prescribed by General von Moltke, namely, from the Bois de Vaux. When the main idea is not understood by leaders of this high rank, it follows that their measures will miss the mark. But, nevertheless, there has never been a case where the whole of the infantry of an army-corps has been so completely broken up and crumbled to atoms without a plan and without an object, as was the case in this instance with the 7th Corps. This is want of judgment indeed, and we might use a strong expression for this method of action. Let the reader choose this expression for himself! As a matter of fact, General von Steinmetz and General von Zastrow made themselves powerless by what they did, neglected to do, or left undone. By the nature of things, their infantry must have brought about the decision, and no express order was necessary to tell them this. But they nowhere had anything entirely under their control, though after 5 p.m. three-quarters of the whole of the infantry of the 7th Corps might have been standing somewhere in front of Rozerieulles in readiness to strike. Surely something might have been done with them.

Matters grew worse, and terribly worse again, when General von

\* Dick de Lonlay says: "Verge's Division, 480 men; Bastoul's Division, 160; Lapasset's Brigade, 60. Total, 700 men."



Steinmetz received the disposal of the 2nd Corps. The dispositions which he then ordered form a counterpart to the celebrated order to pursue, and it actually happened that 48 battalions (including the riff-raff) were posted in the darkness upon a piece of ground 1100 yards square, and in front of the muzzles of the enemy's rifles, without its being possible for them to count upon any support from the artillery. This was no fire-position, and it was, moreover, impossible to fire any more. But in spite of all this the enemy's position might have been captured; indeed, it must have been carried if it had been stormed. When we think of our discipline, we wonder why the 24 fresh battalions did not advance for three minutes energetically to their front; and why, instead of this, they held their ground for eight hours in front of the enemy's muzzles? A little energy would have done it all, and yet our swaggering books are brimful of deeds of heroism and of "dash."

It would have been easy at about 8 p.m. to have brought about a decision from the Bois de Vaux, if the eight battalions who were there had known of the capture of the quarries of Rozerieulles, and if there had been any system of leading. But neither in the 7th, nor afterwards in the 2nd, Corps was it possible to rise to the level of any timely action; and the attack of the former, which began favourably, was stopped by express order on account of the "darkness." The soldier can only die, alike in the darkness or in the light of day; but he ought to die victorious.

The causes of the repeated panics have been narrated; from them the soldier may learn that, in making his dispositions, he must deal with this evil enemy, against whom, as the "white, red, and blue shoulder-straps" teach us, no one is always secure.

That St. Hubert was taken was due to the two arms, the German infantry and artillery; that it was held was due to the artillery alone, since it allowed no opportunity to the French batteries to steadily bombard that farm. If that had taken place, we should not have seen 59 companies of infantry assembled there; they would have scattered apart in all directions.

The general success of the 1st Army in the battle of Gravelotte was terribly small. The whole of three corps were employed against little more than as many divisions, of which part (the 2nd French Corps) had been much weakened by loss, and yet only the advanced position of the enemy was won.

The struggle of the 1st Army had no special influence upon Marshal Bazaine's employment of his reserves, since by 3 p.m. he had already allowed the greater part of them to move off towards St. Privat, and had sent only one brigade against the 1st Army; at the end of the battle he still had another brigade and the cavalry at his disposal. The battle of Gravelotte shows better than that of St. Privat how strong, under present conditions, is a defence which has been prepared beforehand; for this reason we should study the former. This is also evident in the centre, between the two battles, where the German 9th Corps fought with success against the true mass of the enemy, whose flanks were relatively weak.

As compared with the loss of 2043 men by the 2nd and 3rd French corps, the Germans lost—

			Officers.	Men.
The 8th Corps	...	...	174	3066
„ 2nd Corps	...	...	50	1189
„ 7th Corps	...	...	36	785
„ 1st Cavalry Division	...	...	7	88
			<hr/> 267	<hr/> 5128

These figures speak for themselves, and indeed hardly ever have French troops fought more gloriously than did the 2nd Corps, which, at the beginning of the battle, really consisted only of the remnants left by the battles of Spicheren and Vionville; and it thus in truth enforced its own will, and frustrated the intentions of the Germans.

With regard to the details of the German loss, it was heaviest in the 15th Division, in which, according to the Official Account, it amounted to 125 officers, 2206 men, and 47 horses. The 8th Jägers, the 33rd and the 60th suffered the most, and the 67th and the 28th the least. As regards the 67th, when compared with the 8th Jägers, this is explained by the fact that the latter, at the time of the storming of St. Hubert, received fire not only in their front, but also on their left flank, and even in their rear. That these troops nevertheless remained fit for action until dark is an honourable proof of their good spirit.

It may in general be noted that infantry whose attacks failed, such as the 60th, the 33rd, and the 29th, suffered the heaviest loss. Compared with this loss, that of the four battalions of the 32nd Brigade, who under General von Barnekow carried out the only united attack of the day, was quite insignificant. It amounted altogether to 7 officers and 104 men, and in this is included the casualties in the two other battalions of the 40th. Under such circumstances there really seems to have been no reason for their retirement. The 9th Hussars lost 14 men and 32 horses, and the 1st Cavalry Division left 177 horses on the field. Of the 7th Corps only the 39th and 73rd Regiments suffered loss worth mentioning, namely, 4 officers and 124 men, and 3 officers and 164 men, while the corps artillery—for reasons easily intelligible—lost 8 officers, 72 men, and 130 horses. It is only necessary, indeed, to examine the losses of the 7th Corps in order to form an opinion that there could have been no question of their having been properly handled.

## X.

## STRATEGICAL CONCLUSIONS.

MARSHAL BAZAINE neither wished to be driven away from Metz, nor to be driven back upon it. General von Moltke, as has been stated, wished simply to drive him back into it. Marshal Bazaine carried out his will as regards the former point, but not with respect to the latter; and it was not until he found himself forced back into the fortress that the possible consequences became visible to him. Bazaine's twofold object led to energetic fighting on both flanks, to two battles, connected on the German side by a loose, and on the French side by a firm centre. Since, however, the battle of St. Privat has been repeatedly discussed from a tactical point of view, I have not considered it tactically in this work. On the other hand, I had to describe the battle of Gravelotte in full detail; this was still maiden ground.

When relating the tactical details of the battle of Gravelotte, the strategical importance of the battle of St. Privat must come to the front. If Moltke's one object was attained, it followed that he must bring both his enemy's objects to naught; indeed, it was possible to hope that thus both the field-army and the fortress would together fall into our hands.

Moltke's greatest success—which consisted of the operations round Metz up to the end of the battle of the 18th of August—has never been properly appreciated. The catastrophe which formed the close of the passage of arms at Sedan has up to the present day exercised a far greater effect—even upon professional soldiers. We there, with a comparatively small sacrifice of men, obtained a great and obvious success upon the field of battle, combined with a rare political victory. For this reason both the intelligent and the unintelligent public, when the two battles are compared as to their value, laud Sedan a hundred times for once that St. Privat-Gravelotte is praised. The clear blue eagle-eyes of General Moltke saw differently; "Cut off from our communications, we must win victory by our fire." This shows distinctly how highly Moltke himself estimated the success of the 18th. This was the turning-point of the whole war, of which everything else was only the consequence, which the great leader did not altogether anticipate, but of which he yet knew how to take advantage at the right moment.

The military and political centre of gravity of France was in Bazaine's army; if it were removed, the war was as good as won,

and the settlement of accounts was only a question of time. Owing to the streams of blood which had to flow around Metz in order to secure the extinction of Bazaine's army, the German nation has never rightly appreciated the full value of these events, the names of the battles are not popular, and even if this were not the case, a result which has once had its birth in blood cannot be erased from the page of history. But the professional soldier ought to approach the consideration of the value of such events with a calm and quiet mind.

The great Moltke had up to the 18th of August to deal with quite other and far greater difficulties than those which he conquered between the 23rd of August and the 2nd of September. For those who can judge, the two are, in my opinion, sufficiently distinct. In spite of "friction and obstacles," and of a constant struggle against the want of intelligence in those under him and against respect for those over him, Moltke really worked out the same task at Gravelotte as he did later at Sedan; the latter is only the fully developed idea of Gravelotte-St. Privat. As at Sedan, so on the 18th of August two armies had to quit their lines of communication, and to change front in the one case to the north, and in the other to the east; and this in a narrow space, after weighing various contingencies. Everything was more favourable for the operations at Sedan, and, above all, Moltke had then two generals under him, who understood him and anticipated his wishes; whereas, up to the 18th of August, one of them had to be constantly held back, while the other had equally to be somewhat pushed on. The latter certainly fully cancelled the proportion of blame which was his due, while the former was by his action at Gravelotte finally and for ever struck out of the list of leaders in war; but Gravelotte-St. Privat is, and will continue to be, Moltke's grandest feat. Moreover, the battle of Gravelotte teaches us that the best strategy can have no result if the tactics are faulty.

THE END.



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